



***RAJA YOGA SCHOOL***

**Metodology and the Ethics of  
Spiritual Teaching**

## Table of Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Chapter One: Attitudes of a Spiritual Teacher.....</b>                   | <b>5</b>  |
| Attunement: Superconscious Inspiration, Swami Kriyananda.....               | 5         |
| The Importance of Meditation – Swami Kriyananda.....                        | 5         |
| Know God First, Yogananda.....  | 11        |
| Be Sincere and Loyal to Truth, Swami Kriyananda.....                        | 12        |
| Overcoming Nervousness, Swami Kriyananda.....                               | 13        |
| Self-Confidence, Swami Kriyananda.....                                      | 15        |
| Guard Against An Inflated Ego, Yogananda.....                               | 15        |
| <b>Chapter Two: Understanding and Relating to the Audience.....</b>         | <b>16</b> |
| What is their level of interest in spirituality?.....                       | 16        |
| What do they know or have they heard about meditation? Misconceptions?..... | 16        |
| What is their particular mind set/life situation?.....                      | 16        |
| What do they want to obtain from meditation?.....                           | 17        |
| Evaluating their character.....   | 17        |
| Engage them in conversation.....  | 17        |
| <b>Chapter Three: Teaching Skills.....</b>                                  | <b>18</b> |
| Preparing Your Talk Worksheet.....  | 18        |
| How To Develop Self-Confidence, Swami Kriyananda.....                       | 25        |
| Developing and Improving the Voice, Yogananda.....                          | 35        |
| Pay attention to the tones of your voice, Swami Kriyananda.....             | 39        |
| Secrets of Winning People, Swami Kriyananda.....                            | 40        |
| Shivani's secrets of teaching.....  | 42        |
| <b>Chapter Four: Researches on the Effects of Meditation.....</b>           | <b>44</b> |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| The Brain – Engineered for Divinity, Peter van Houten, M.D.....   | 44         |
| Research on Stress, Health and Meditation, David Gamow.....   | 48         |
| Jefferson hospital study.....   | 62         |
| Dr. Herbert Benson, Harvard Medical School.....   | 66         |
| Dealing With Change and Stress, Jyotish Novak.....  | 68         |
| The Sounds of Silence: Anti-noise machines.....   | 70         |
| Stress: Can we Cope?.....   | 73         |
| Benefits of Deep relaxation.....  | 89         |
| Meditation as Medicine on the Rise.....   | 90         |
| Meet the “mindfulness” caucus: Politicians who meditate!.....   | 93         |
| <b>Chapter Five: Guidelines for Energization Exercises, Hong So e Raja Yoga Series<br/>Classes.....</b> | <b>96</b>  |
| Protocol for Teaching Energization Exercises.....   | 96         |
| Protocol for Teaching Energization Exercises for 4 Classes.....   | 98         |
| Protocol for Teaching Hong So.....  | 101        |
| Protocol for Teaching Hong So – Guidelines for Four-Classes.....  | 105        |
| Protocol for a Raja Yoga Series in Ten Classes.....   | 109        |
| <b>Chapter Five: Chanting.....</b>  | <b>110</b> |
| From Cosmic Chants – Prelude (1938), Paramhansa Yogananda.....  | 110        |
| <i>From Awaken to Superconsciousness, Swami Kriyananda</i> .....  | 112        |
| <i>Guidelines for Chanting, Swami Kriyananda</i> .....  | 117        |
| <i>When to Use The Cosmic Chants, Paramhansa Yogananda, 1938</i> .....                                  | 120        |
| <i>The Different States of Chanting, Paramhansa Yogananda</i> .....                                     | 121        |
| <i>Superconsciousness – Not Unconsciousness, Paramhansa Yogananda</i> .....                             | 122        |
| <b>Chapter Seven: Guidelines to Create a Meditation Group.....</b>                                      | <b>123</b> |
| Introduction.....   | 123        |
| What is an Ananda Meditation Group.....   | 124        |
| Are you ready to form an Ananda Meditation Group?.....  | 125        |
| The Leader's Role.....  | 126        |
| Excerpts about “leadership” from Kriyananda’s books.....  | 128        |
| How to structure a meditation evening.....  | 131        |
| The Meeting Place.....  | 134        |
| Other Activities.....   | 135        |
| Service is Joy.....   | 136        |
| Finances.....   | 137        |
| Promoting Your Group.....   | 139        |
| Contact with Ananda Sangha and other Ananda groups.....   | 141        |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| Resources.....  | 141        |
| Inspiration from Paramhansa Yogananda and Swami Kriyananda..... | 143        |
| <b>Chapter Eight: Addendum.....</b>                             | <b>147</b> |
| Addendum 1: Famous People Who Meditate.....                     | 147        |
| Addendum 2: Guidelines for Leading Guided Meditations.....      | 152        |
| Addendum 3: Prepare the environment.....                        | 152        |

## **Chapter One: Attitudes of a Spiritual Teacher**

### **Attunement: Superconscious Inspiration, Swami Kriyananda**

I was with Yogananda while he dictated much of this work. And I observed his method of channeling. He didn't sit back, close his eyes, and slip into subconsciousness. Far from being unconscious, the state he entered was very much more than man's normal, outward consciousness.

He would lower his eyelids, go within, and gaze up into the spiritual eye. Stilling his mind at that point, he would pass quickly into superconsciousness. And then he would speak.

When he lectured, it was the same way, though before the public he had eye contact with his audience, and often gazed at an individual as he spoke words of comfort or advice intended especially for that person. If people complimented him afterwards on his talk, he would reply with perfect sincerity, "God did it, not I."

Before lecturing, he would remain silent and withdrawn, and tune in to higher guidance. During the lecture itself, one could sense that he always kept a part of himself withdrawn, consciously held open to the higher Self as it flowed through him. So inspired was he at such times that even the tones of his voice rang with the bliss of God.

*--From How to be a Channel, Chapter Six*

§§§

### **The Importance of Meditation – Swami Kriyananda**

In his famous book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, Dale Carnegie stated that the best way to be thought a fascinating conversationalist is to listen attentively, and with interest. This principle applies also, though of course not in quite the same way, to the practice of prayer.

Most people when they pray talk to God rather than with Him. They don't take the time to listen, in deep inner silence, for His answer. Prayer, however, to be most deeply meaningful, needs to be a two-way communication, a giving and receiving — like conversation. And while it would be absurd to think in terms of "fascinating" God with our part of the conversation, there are proven ways of making our prayers more effective. Listening is one of them.

How many people ever think of prayer in this way? Usually, they think of it as begging for special favors, as though prayer were a petition submitted before the awful majesty of an imperial throne. Many, no doubt, question whether the Lord will even single them out for special attention from among the multitudes appealing to Him daily. Perhaps they fear they might be judged presumptuous if they tried to interest Him beyond the actual subject of their petition. Whatever the case, most people talk a lot, like inadequate conversationalists, but seldom think of listening in return.

The difference between the one-way street of normal prayer and actually conversing with God is simply the degree of involvement — on both sides. Of course, there can be no question of trying to “fascinate” Him with our conversation. The Lord has all creation to engage His attention, besides the perfection of love and bliss in which He eternally dwells. One petty life in the great scheme of things cannot particularize His interest to the point of making Him fascinated with it! When we approach Him, however, with deep love, dedication, and trust, we appeal to that cosmic, but at the same time deeply personal, love which He feels for every one of his human children.

Prayer must come from the heart. That is what I mean by conversation. As there is a world of difference between talking at someone and talking with him, so there is a universe of difference between petitioning God and including Him in the needs we feel.

We need to involve Him in our lives, in our love for Him. How can we hope to do that, if we merely pray to him? That’s like talking at somebody.

Leaving aside the question of fascination, conversationally, how are we most likely to involve anyone in anything that interests us? It isn’t much different from listening for answers to a question. We involve them best when we include their reality in our own. To awaken concern in them for our needs, we must show an interest in their needs. To get them to participate in our lives, we must participate in their lives. To get them to show love for us, we must love them, first.

All this involvement on our part is, in its own way, a kind of listening. We need, in the same way, to listen to God. The kind of prayer that most often wins a response is one in which the person praying converses with God: calls to Him, while at the same time listening for His silent response in the soul.

And that is, essentially, what is meant by the practice of meditation. Meditation is the act of listening for, and hopefully, in time, listening to, God’s whispered response in the soul.

Why not try that, next time you pray to God? Instead of merely offering up a petition for His consideration, try involving Him in your needs.

Meditation is more than a practice conducted at specific times of the day. It is a habit of mind, a way of life. Try sharing your thoughts and feelings with God all day long. Listen for His guidance, His approval — yes, even His silent laughter within! When you share your life with Him, your meditations also will be much deeper.

When people exclude the practice of meditation from daily prayer, it usually means they aren’t really convinced there is anyone “up there,” listening to them. All too easily, their prayers become a process of simply talking to themselves.

Well, one may ask, does God really listen anyway? You'll never know, if you don't give Him a chance to reply! Just as in any conversation, the degree of listening, and the response it awakens, is in direct proportion to the degree of one's own involvement in what he is saying. Why else is it that the prayers of saints have been, often, so much more effective than those of worldly people? God is no respecter of persons. His response is according to the depth of sincerity in the person praying.

In conversation, people tend to think of listening as something one does after he has said his piece. Personally, however, I've found that there is much better communication if one "listens" — that is to say, is sensitive to the other person's reactions — even during the act of speaking to him. When lecturing, also, even though I don't expect people to start up a conversation with me from the audience, I've found it helps, while lecturing, to "tune into" their needs, to respond to their unspoken reactions, to feel as though I were speaking to each one of them individually.

On the subject of lecturing, I've found it helps also to "listen" even before I begin speaking. By that I mean that I meditate and try to tune into what the people in this particular audience need to hear from me.

In the same way, Paramhansa Yogananda (author of *Autobiography of a Yogi*), who brought teachings and techniques from India to the West, used to say that prayer is most effective when it is offered after some contact with God has been achieved in deep meditation.

Western society generally identifies meditation with the thinking process. We are told to meditate "on" a particular subject. Vaguely, we suppose this means to think in circles around it, hoping for a deeper understanding of it. Only comparatively recently has the teaching come to the West that silence itself is the wellspring from which true understanding arises. In other words, true, and especially spiritual, understanding is not the product of thinking one's way to it, but of direct inner perception. As Yogananda wrote in his autobiography, "A truth cannot be created, but only perceived."

Meditation, in this deeper sense, begins with the practice of stilling one's thoughts and emotions.

Yogananda told the story of a man who was told, as a means of developing spiritual power, to be very careful not to think of monkeys. Of course, the next time he sat to meditate, the first thing he thought about was monkeys! The more he tried not to think of them, the more he probed his memory for every variety of monkey he'd ever read or heard about. Monkeys gradually became an obsession. At last, he returned to his teacher and cried, "Take back this teaching of yours! All it has done is give me monkey-consciousness, not God-consciousness!"

At this, the teacher laughed genially and explained, “I only wanted to help you realize how difficult it is to develop spiritual powers, without first learning to control your own mind.” He then went on to explain to his student the positive aspects of meditation.

So then, the first lesson is: Don’t live in “monkey consciousness”! Instead of trying not to let thoughts and emotions enter your mind, dwell on positive opposite practices that will exert a calming influence on your mind.

The breath is one such influence, when it is used rightly. Not only does the breath reflect one’s mental states: It also greatly affects them.

Take the breath as a reflection of thought and feeling. When a person is agitated, his breathing automatically speeds up. When he falls asleep, his breathing rhythm changes: two counts of exhalation, to one of inhalation. When he is deeply concentrated, he tends to hold his breath. When he is calm, his breathing becomes calm also.

The reverse also is true. By breathing agitatedly, one tends to create an agitated mental or emotional state. A photographer, when taking a photo demanding sensitivity and concentration, learns to hold his breath before clicking the camera shutter.

By calm, deep breathing, similarly, the mind and emotions grow calm also, releasing us from any turmoil that may have been seething within us. This is why the advice is so often given to people who are angry or upset, “First, take a deep breath, and count to ten.”

A good practice when sitting to meditate is to do a few deep breathing exercise. The yoga teachings offer a number of such exercises, some of which I explain in my book, *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga*. Less sophisticated than many of these, but quite effective, is this:

Sit upright, and breathe deeply through the nostrils counting 1-12 Hold the breath 1-12. Then exhale, again to a count of 1-12 In this particular exercise, don’t hold the breath out, but begin again immediately with another inhalation. Repeat this exercise six to twelve times.

Your posture during meditation is important. We’ve all seen photographs in advertisements of people “meditating” according to the Western notion of relaxation: a person reclining comfortably on a “hazy Boy” chair, his feet up, his head tilted back on the headrest, his entire posture suggestive of a mood of abandonment. The yogis of India would smile at this passive attempt at relaxation. The fact is, while relaxation is essential to deep meditation, passivity is one of the pitfalls to true relaxation.

There are two directions the mind can take once it relaxes its grip on conscious thought processes. One is to sink toward subconsciousness. This is the direction taken when one’s relaxation is passive The other direction is to rise toward superconsciousness. Deep meditation is possible only in the intensely positive state of superconsciousness, or soul-awareness.

To attain this state of consciousness, it is important to sit upright with a straight spine. Traditionally, one does so sitting on the floor with the legs crossed, preferably in one of the yoga positions such as the half or full lotus pose, or siddhasana (the “perfect pose”), but Yogananda said that it is quite all right to sit on a straight-backed chair, with the feet flat on the floor.

Sit away from the back of the chair. Place your hands palms upward at the junction of the thighs and abdomen. Hold the shoulders back to help keep the spine straight. Hold the chin parallel to the ground.

Before the deep breathing exercise, relax the body. First, inhale, tense the whole body till it vibrates; then throw the breath out, and with it all tension. Repeat this process two or three times.

After the deep breathing, concentrate on relaxing more and more deeply — not physically only, but mentally and emotionally. Feel space in the body.

Look upward, concentrating your attention at the central point between the two eyebrows, the seat of spiritual vision. Offer up all thoughts and feelings in deep concentration at this point. Call mentally to God, “Reveal Thyself! Reveal Thyself!”

Gradually, you will feel His peace stealing over you, like a weightless waterfall.

Western society generally identifies meditation with the thinking process. We are told to meditate “on” a particular subject. Vaguely, we suppose this means to think in circles around it, hoping for a deeper understanding of it. Only comparatively recently has the teaching come to the West that silence itself is the wellspring from which true understanding arises. In other words, true, and especially spiritual, understanding is not the product of thinking one’s way to it, but of direct inner perception. As Yogananda wrote in his autobiography, “A truth cannot be created, but only perceived.”

Meditation, in this deeper sense, begins with the practice of stilling one’s thoughts and emotions.

Yogananda told the story of a man who was told, as a means of developing spiritual power, to be very careful not to think of monkeys. Of course, the next time he sat to meditate, the first thing he thought about was monkeys! The more he tried not to think of them, the more he probed his memory for every variety of monkey he’d ever read or heard about. Monkeys gradually became an obsession. At last, he returned to his teacher and cried, “Take back this teaching of yours! All it has done is give me monkey-consciousness, not God-consciousness!”

At this, the teacher laughed genially and explained, “I only wanted to help you realize how difficult it is to develop spiritual powers, without first learning to control your own mind.” He then went on to explain to his student the positive aspects of meditation.

So then, the first lesson is: Don’t live in “monkey consciousness”! Instead of trying not to let thoughts and emotions enter your mind, dwell on positive opposite practices that will exert a calming influence on your mind.

The breath is one such influence, when it is used rightly. Not only does the breath reflect one’s mental states: It also greatly affects them.

Take the breath as a reflection of thought and feeling. When a person is agitated, his breathing automatically speeds up. When he falls asleep, his breathing rhythm changes: two counts of exhalation, to one of inhalation. When he is deeply concentrated, he tends to hold his breath. When he is calm, his breathing becomes calm also.

The reverse also is true. By breathing agitatedly, one tends to create an agitated mental or emotional state. A photographer, when taking a photo demanding sensitivity and concentration, learns to hold his breath before clicking the camera shutter.

By calm, deep breathing, similarly, the mind and emotions grow calm also, releasing us from any turmoil that may have been seething within us. This is why the advice is so often given to people who are angry or upset, “First, take a deep breath, and count to ten.”

A good practice when sitting to meditate is to do a few deep breathing exercise. The yoga teachings offer a number of such exercises, some of which I explain in my book, *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga*. Less sophisticated than many of these, but quite effective, is this:

Sit upright, and breathe deeply through the nostrils counting 1-12 Hold the breath 1-12. Then exhale, again to a count of 1-12 In this particular exercise, don’t hold the breath out, but begin again immediately with another inhalation. Repeat this exercise six to twelve times.

Your posture during meditation is important. We’ve all seen photographs in advertisements of people “meditating” according to the Western notion of relaxation: a person reclining comfortably on a “hazy Boy” chair, his feet up, his head tilted back on the headrest, his entire posture suggestive of a mood of abandonment. The yogis of India would smile at this passive attempt at relaxation. The fact is, while relaxation is essential to deep meditation, passivity is one of the pitfalls to true relaxation.

There are two directions the mind can take once it relaxes its grip on conscious thought processes. One is to sink toward subconsciousness. This is the direction taken when one's relaxation is passive. The other direction is to rise toward superconsciousness. Deep meditation is possible only in the intensely positive state of superconsciousness, or soul-awareness.

To attain this state of consciousness, it is important to sit upright with a straight spine. Traditionally, one does so sitting on the floor with the legs crossed, preferably in one of the yoga positions such as the half or full lotus pose, or siddhasana (the "perfect pose"), but Yogananda said that it is quite all right to sit on a straight-backed chair, with the feet flat on the floor.

Sit away from the back of the chair. Place your hands palms upward at the junction of the thighs and abdomen. Hold the shoulders back to help keep the spine straight. Hold the chin parallel to the ground.

Before the deep breathing exercise, relax the body. First, inhale, tense the whole body till it vibrates; then throw the breath out, and with it all tension. Repeat this process two or three times.

After the deep breathing, concentrate on relaxing more and more deeply — not physically only, but mentally and emotionally. Feel space in the body.

Look upward, concentrating your attention at the central point between the two eyebrows, the seat of spiritual vision. Offer up all thoughts and feelings in deep concentration at this point. Call mentally to God, "Reveal Thyself! Reveal Thyself!"

Gradually, you will feel His peace stealing over you, like a weightless waterfall.

§§§

### **Know God First, Yogananda**

The man suffering from theological indigestion himself cannot cure others suffering from the same malady. The theologically wise, but ignorant in Self-Realization cannot lead others into the haven of spiritual Self-Realization. Jesus and His disciples awakened God-contact in many men, but many of the modern ministers (products of theological schools and not of schools of Self-Realization) cannot awaken God in people, because they know not God themselves. Passing theological examination, regular preparation and delivering of theoretical sermons, and talking in a holy voice, with emotion, does not make one God-known or make him able to transmit God to others. God's ministry should never be chosen as a life work without knowing God first in one's own consciousness. Even business ethics demand that one should never attempt to sell anything without a thorough acquaintance with the article and faith in its usefulness. Then why try to sell God to others without knowing or believing at all what God is and how He can be useful to all in the supreme way?

*--From The Second Coming of Christ, Inner Life magazine, January, 1937*

## **Be Sincere and Loyal to Truth, Swami Kriyananda**

Thus it was that, during my years of organizing, most of the guidance I received related to organizing. Consequently, I kept feeling I wasn't yet ready to get into lecturing seriously. But when outward necessity forced me to concentrate more on public speaking, I began receiving guidance primarily as a speaker. People now began telling me that something I had said in a lecture had changed their lives, or answered some long-standing doubt, or awakened love for God in their hearts for the first time.

More was involved here, however, than guidance. For organizing hadn't actually been God's long-range will for me. Now that I was doing more specifically what Master had asked of me, I felt a growing sense of inner fulfillment and joy.

At first I approached public speaking with an attitude developed over years of organizing activities. That is to say, though a minister, I spoke more as one representing my church than as one deeply concerned for the people I was serving. But I soon discovered that, just as organizational activity has its own logic, so also do teaching and counseling. For a minister, it is important to give the highest priority to people's needs. Only by attuning oneself to them may one hope to reach them.

I was aware that, in my evolving understanding of the ministry, I was not treading any well-paved highway. Most of the ministers I'd met seemed to view themselves rather as spokesmen for their churches than as ministers to hungry souls. They reverted hastily to monologue, whenever dialogue looked threatening. I myself, as an SRF minister, had a tendency to begin with to let Master's teachings speak for themselves, rather than apply those truths creatively to my specific listeners.

Sincerity in the ministry came to mean to me, above all, sincerity to the people I was serving. If, I thought, a minister's duty were to answer every question with a dogma, he might as well record whatever he has to say and ask his secretary to play the appropriate tape. But one who sincerely wants to help people cannot but discover in time, because he listens to them, that the guises truth wears are many. His aim then becomes, not to bind people to his church and make "dyed-in-the-wool" believers of them, but to awaken in them a sense of the divine truth within themselves. As Paramhansa Yogananda put it, "Our only goal is to 'dye people in the wool' of their own Kriya Yoga practice."

Often Master told us, "Self-Realization Fellowship is not a sect." As long as my own focus was on organizing, his statement seemed less relevant to me. But it assumed vital significance once I began serving the public. For as I attuned myself to the true task of the ministry, I understood that such service, to be effective, must be centered in truth itself; it must be free of any hidden, sectarian motive.

Sometimes I would actually recommend to someone that he join some other spiritual work. In India once during a question-and-answer period after a public lecture, I urged a listener to spend his weekends at a nearby Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Afterwards this man approached me

and asked, "How did you know that I'm a member of that ashram?" I hadn't known, actually, but something about him had brought that society to mind as being on his spiritual "wavelength." Probably this particular degree of nonsectarianism will not be found in any textbook for the ministry! Because I placed people's own, actual needs ahead of normal institutional considerations, however, thousands, satisfied that I wanted only to share with them truths I myself deeply believed in, joined our work as a result of my lectures and classes.

*--From The Path, Chapter 40*

§§§

### **Overcoming Nervousness, Swami Kriyananda**

A problem for any new speaker is how to avoid feeling nervous in front of an audience. My own problem was accentuated by the fact that I was so young, and looked even younger. The average age of my listeners was about forty. I could count on their knowing a great deal more about most things than I did.

Abie George, a disciple in Hollywood of whom we were all particularly fond, suggested a solution. Deeply devoted ("a beautiful soul," Master called him), Abie also had a colorful sense of humor, and a most unusual way of expressing it. "It's very simple," he explained with mock earnestness. "No, hey, I mean it," he persisted, laughingly forestalling my anticipated objections, "it really is simple. All as you gotta do is picture to yourself alla them there people in fronta you as a buncha cabbage heads. That's all! Just say to yourself, 'You uns out there are nothin' but a buncha cabbage heads!' Like that." I thanked him, dubiously.

James Collier, the minister of our church in Phoenix, offered another suggestion. "I was so nervous when I first started lecturing," he said, "that Master suggested I take a hot bath before my talks, to relax. One evening I was supposed to give an introductory lecture to a series of public classes. The announced subject was 'What Yoga Can Do for You.'

"Well, I took a long, hot bath beforehand! Too long," James added, chuckling, "and too hot. It sapped all my energy. I arrived for that lecture so limp I felt more like a steam-heated towel than a human being! After five minutes of speaking I found I'd covered everything could think of to say on the subject. It was probably the shortest lecture those people had ever attended!

"Next, Horace took up a collection. He's spastic, you know. After my five-minute lecture on what yoga can do for you, my only assistant went staggering from row to row with the collection plate, clutching at the backs of chairs for support."

This story, told with much laughter on James part, left us holding our sides in merriment. It hadn't seemed quite so funny to his audience, however. They got up and left without a word. Fortunately, the episode had a more gratifying sequel. One man, after leaving the room, returned, moved by James's obvious goodness and sincerity. This man later became a devoted follower of Master's work.

"Well, anyway," James concluded, addressing me, "you might try soaking yourself in hot water before your lectures." His story, I confessed, had left me somewhat less than reassured.

The solution I myself found to the problem of nervousness was to imagine the worst audience response possible, and accept it—in short, to be willing to appear a fool. "It is all God's dream anyway," I would remind myself before a lecture, "so what does it matter whether people accept me or reject me?"

Indifference to the fruits of my efforts proved a solution to the problem of nervousness, but it didn't help me in the far more important matter of communicating with my listeners. For, in telling myself it was all a dream, I ended up not really caring whether I spoke well or not.

Only gradually did I become a conscientious speaker, as the awareness grew in me that the people I was speaking to were manifestations of God, and as I understood that it was through them, rather than by merely surviving the personal ordeal of appearing before them, that I was being asked to serve Him. Thus I was cured also of a temptation that is common to public speakers, to be satisfied if they can make their points convincing to themselves. For in seeing God manifested in the forms of my listeners, and in realizing that what I had to say was a service to Him through them, it became important to me to express myself in a way that would reach Him through them.

At first I used to pray before every lecture, "Lord, inspire me to say what You want said." Later I learned to ask Him also, "Help me sense what this particular audience needs to hear through me." Often, sensing needs different from those I had come prepared to speak about, I would give a completely different talk from the one I'd intended. Indeed, I learned in time to prepare minimally, if at all, for my lectures, for I found that an open mind enabled me to respond more sensitively to the unvoiced needs of my listeners. The results of this approach proved gratifying. Many people began thanking me after my lectures for answering their specific questions, or for dealing with problems that had been weighing on their minds. I always shared with them the real secret of my success: "God is the Doer." For it was in this thought above all that Master trained us.

When I was first learning to lecture, Master gave me the following words of advice: "Before lecturing, meditate deeply. Then, holding that meditative calmness, think about what you intend to say. Write down your ideas. Include one or two funny stories; people are more receptive when they can enjoy a good laugh. Then finish with a story from the SRF lessons. After that, put the subject out of your mind. While speaking, keep mentally before you the salient points of your outline, but above all ask the Spirit to flow through you. In that way you will draw your inspiration from that inner Source, and will not speak from ego."

Most important of all to Master was the question of our attunement while lecturing, that we might share with our listeners not only our ideas, but our vibrations. Late one Thursday afternoon he spied Dr. Lewis out on the grounds in Encinitas, enjoying a stroll.

"Doctor," he called out, "aren't you giving the service this evening?"

"Yes, Sir," Dr. Lewis called back.

"Then what are you doing roaming about? You should be meditating!"

In time, I reached the point where I could actually feel a power flowing from my attunement with Master, and filling any room in which I might be lecturing. If anything I said touched my listeners, the credit was due to this power far more than to any words I uttered.

*--From The Path, Chapter 26*

§§§

### **Self-Confidence, Swami Kriyananda**

Self-confidence, as it is normally understood, recalls to mind images of army generals and cowboy heroes - people, in short, who know their blacks from their whites. But life's alternatives are usually much more complex.

Self-confidence on the spiritual path is of another order altogether. It means confidence in the inner Self, not in the ego. It means living from within, living by truth rather than by opinions. It means living by what God wants, not by what man wants. Thus, it means living by faith, in the sure knowledge that, although man is fallible, God is infallible.

#### ***Affirmation***

I live in the assurance of God's truth within. In my inner Self, and not in the opinions of others, lies true victory.

#### ***Prayer***

What matter, if people blame me? Of what importance is their applause? I live to please Thee, Lord, confident that when Thou art with me I am protected, though it be from an enemy horde.

*--From Affirmations for Self-Healing*

§§§

### **Guard Against An Inflated Ego, Yogananda**

An inferiority complex is born of contact with weak-minded people and the weak innate subconscious mind. A superiority complex results from false pride and an inflated Ego. Both inferiority and superiority complexes are destructive to self-development. Both are fostered by imagination, ignoring facts, while neither belongs to the true, all-powerful nature of the Soul. Found your self-confidence upon actual achievements, and you will be free from all inferiority and superiority complexes. Conquer pride by humility, wrath by love, excitement by calmness, selfishness by unselfishness, evil by good, ignorance by knowledge, and restlessness by the ineffable peace acquired in the stillness of complete silence. Take pride in being humble.

*--From Praecepta, Lesson 14 (1936)*

## Chapter Two: Understanding and Relating to the Audience

### What is their level of interest in spirituality?

- **Experienced** in yoga and meditation. They practice and have read many books.
- **High interest.** They have some exposure to yoga, reiki, martial arts, other practices
- **Know someone** who practices and they have observed the benefits.
- **Heard** about it, and they are curious.
- Here because **friend/spouse** brought them. Possibly skeptical.
- **Recommended** by a doctor, psychologist, yoga teacher.

### What do they know or have they heard about meditation? Misconceptions?

- Know about Kriya Yoga and want to get it.
- Understand meditation as it is understood in Christian context—contemplation.
- Have read a book and tried it at home.
- Have practiced brief meditations in yoga class.
- Have practiced Buddhist meditation, TM, mind control-Silva, other.
- Practice Reiki, martial arts.
- Have had "bad" experience.
- They believe that it is something weird, foreign, occult-spiritualistic.
- Think that you have to dedicate hours every day.
- Think that it is good for health, relaxation, concentration.

### What is their particular mind set/life situation?

- **Scientific** background (doctor, engineer, scientist, computer programmer)
- **Literary** background (teacher, writer)
- **Artistic**
- In **business**, high energy and motivation
- Interest in "**new age**"—healing, Reiki, angels
- **Philosophical** interest/atheist/from communist country or another religion
- Normal **worker**, not very motivated or happy
- Observant **Church** person, but not completely satisfied

- **Mother** with small children. **Retired** person. **Children gone** from home.
- **Sports** enthusiast (look at body type)
- **Stressed** business person
- In **crisis**: health, relationships, job, hopelessness, confusion

### **What do they want to obtain from meditation?**

- Peace
- Stress reduction, relaxation, sleep better
- Mental clarity: find answers for professional or personal life; want success
- Seek inner strength to deal with life situations
- Desire God realization

### **Evaluating their character**

- **Through Observation**
- **Eyes** – do they have light? Are they calm or restless? Do they look at you or away? Look up or down?
- **Posture** and body type: Are they centered? nervous? aware of body movements? Tense? Graceful or awkward? open or closed? confident or diffident?
- **Voice**: Observe it's quality, tone, pitch, speed of talking, nervous or calm, egoic nasal sounds? Aggressive, energetic, enthusiastic qualities?,
- **Clothes** and General Appearance: indicates their self image.
- **Gestures, facial expressions**: calm or nervous, open or closed
- **Vibrations**: the general feeling they emanate, they way they relate to themselves, to space, to others.

### **Engage them in conversation.**

- Have they ever tried meditation?
- Do they go to a yoga class?
- Is this the first time you have this kind of experience (spiritual retreat)
- What is your work? Do you like it? satisfied?
- Living situation—with parents, have children, own house?
- Previous experiences with meditation or yoga or other practices?

# Chapter Three: Teaching Skills

## Preparing Your Talk Worksheet

TITLE OF YOUR TALK: “ \_\_\_\_\_ ”

### The Context of your presentation

- Where are you speaking, why are you there, what is the environment like? Who spoke before you (or which of your classes came before), who will speak after you (or which class will come next)?

### The Audience

- Who is listening to your talk? How did they get to the talk (where was it announced)?
- What are their daily problems and stresses?
- What are their thoughts, experiences, prejudices on the subject?
- What are they expecting from you and your talk?

### Your Goals

- What is your central theme (in one sentence or one phrase, even one word)

- What one thought do you want them to remember?
- What feeling do you want them to leave with?
- What action(s) do you want them to take?

**Problem-Solution Analysis.** You will be offering them some solution, therefore:

- What problems exist in their lives, in the world, that require resolution?
- What is your solution and how does it help them?

**Your Purposes – which one or ones of the following apply to your talk?**

- INFORM: what information do you need to communicate?
- INSPIRE: about what, and how do you plan to inspire them?
- PERSUADE/CONVINCE: Precisely about what do you want to persuade them, and what actions will you recommend?

### **The Introduction**

- \*How do you intend to make **contact** with the audience? (Something about them or their city or country. Use story or joke. Make them say “yes.”)
- **\*Introduce the main argument.** – write here the main argument in one phrase:

Support the main argument with one of the following: Examples/stories/your personal connection, testimonials from you and others/why it is important/why it works

- \*Make a **bridge** to the main part of the talk.

**General approach for your 3 main points:**

- ✓ WHY is (your subject, theme) important/useful – the benefits, results
- ✓ WHAT is it? Definition, description of that subject
- ✓ HOW to do it.

**The main part of the talk” the 3 points that constitute the skeleton of your presentation**

- **First theme:**

3-5 points to develop, each with at least one story, example, metaphor, etc.

a)

b)

c)

Possible group practice

- **Second theme:**

3-5 points to develop, each with at least one story, example, metaphor, etc.

a)

b)

c)

Possible group practice

- **Third theme:**

3-5 points to develop, each with at least one story, example, metaphor, etc.

a)

b)

c)

Possible group practice

## **The Conclusion**

- **\*Summary** of the important points:
  - Repeat the main point
  - Emphasize the feeling with a final story or example
    - **Call to action**
- **\*Resources** that people can use for further study  
**Classes, retreats, on-line materials, Website, books, video lessons and practices**
- **Bridge to whatever will follow your presentation, be it someone else, or a future program**

## **ADDENDUM**

- If your talk is meant to introduce a person or a project or event, complete these questions
  - a) Who is the person, or the event you are introducing?
  - b) What is your personal connection with him/her/it – a personal story
  - c) What is the main subject to be presented (without presenting it yourself)
  - d) Why should the audience be listening to him/her, how will they benefit?

## How To Develop Self-Confidence, Swami Kriyananda

"How," a young spiritual seeker once asked me, "can I develop self-confidence? Every book I've read about achieving success stresses the importance of developing confidence in one's self, of knowing that one is good at what one wants to do. Unfortunately, I simply haven't that confidence. And I think those books must be right, for no matter how hard I try, I never seem to do things as well as I'd like to do them."

"I've glanced through some of those books," I replied, "and find that what they're trying to do is promote egotism. That means pride, which my Guru said is 'the death of wisdom.' Without wisdom, the success achieved will be fragile."

"Are you saying," he inquired, "that the kind of person those books describe as the ideal is himself fragile? The self-confident people I've met certainly don't seem so! Many of them are rich, famous, or powerful. They seem to have achieved everything they wanted."

"Of course you are right," I agreed. "Pride does go before a fall, but that fall doesn't necessarily come quickly. The fragility lies in the very success they achieve. They think to find security in wealth, but will never be able to keep the wealth for very long. Fame, too, is short-lived. Worldly power soon passes on to someone else. As my Guru said, 'Money and fame are like prostitutes: they are loyal to no man.'

"What I suggest, then," I continued, "is that you study the different kinds of success, and of self-confidence that led to that success, and see which works the best."

He: Are you saying that some kinds of success are less fragile and more long-lasting than others: that some kinds of success last a long time, or forever? and that some kinds of self-confidence work better than others?

I: Yes, to both questions. The success of a great artist is more long-lasting, certainly, than that of a mediocre one. The influence on humanity is greater and more long-lasting in the case of a great master like Jesus Christ than in that of a business tycoon, or, let us say, of a conqueror like Genghis Khan or Napoleon. And self-confidence that is not boastful, but rooted in calm self-knowledge, is much more effective than the "crowing rooster" kind.

He: Well, I'm not in any case interested in outstanding achievements! I just want to be able to do well whatever I do, without dreading the possible consequences.

I: You've made me curious. I know you to be intelligent, eloquent, nice looking. What do you think caused your problem?

He: Well, perhaps it was my father. I know it's a complex I have, but the thing is, he kept putting me down because I wasn't living up to his ambitions for me, and because I didn't share his particular interests in life.

I: I see. Well, that's common enough. But a specific cause can be important. In this case, evidently, you're struggling with an inferiority complex. No one likes to disappoint his parents -- perhaps especially not his father.

Most supposed "cures" for an inferiority complex, as far as I know, focus on helping a person to build up his self-esteem. Affirmations can be very helpful in this respect: telling oneself, for instance, "I have in me the power and the ability to conquer every obstacle!" or, "I am wise. I am strong. I am master of my destiny!" These things are good to affirm.

They have a disadvantage, however. Their purpose is to resuscitate a weak or ailing ego which, though helpful if the ego has been damaged, doesn't take into account the fact that having an ego at all can be self-damaging. Why? Simply because it is self-limiting!

He: But what else can account for success -- unless it be some wholly extraneous factor like influence, or good luck?

I: I grant you that. Worldly people haven't really much else to go on. You're a devotee, however. This means you understand that the goal of life is to find God. In that search, the first thing you need to overcome is the usual focus on the egoic self. What those attempts at creating self-esteem and self-confidence accomplish, generally, is replace an inferiority with a superiority complex. Both of these "complexes," my Guru said, are more or less equally obstacles to true and long-lasting success.

He: Can you suggest ways to help me overcome this weakness, as I struggle to achieve success?

I: Certainly. My little book, *Secrets of Success*, contains thirty-one such suggestions -- one for every day of the month. All of them relate in one way or another to shifting one's focus away from self-preoccupation, and directing it toward whatever is being done. Once people become really good at doing anything, they usually accept that competence and move on. Those last two secrets, however, focus on seeking to channel a higher power.

For example, secret 30 says, "The secret of success is attuning your limited, human will to the infinite divine will." Secret 31 states, "The secret of success is humility, realizing that pride is [as my Guru taught] the death of wisdom, and the paralysis of every worthwhile endeavor."

He: Are you speaking of success in spiritual undertakings? I can see the importance of praying for God's help when the work one does is for Him. My problem, however, relates to work I do for personal ends: seeking work to support my family, or even doing something trivial like defending my point of view in a discussion.

I: Just as it's a mistake to pray to or think of God only in church, so the devotee should try to include God in everything he does.

He: But isn't it somehow wrong to ask Him to make me rich, or to inspire me with ways of winning a discussion on political issues?

I: Of course it is! I do agree with you. Speaking personally, I too, in my desire to rise above ego, have always refused to pray even for my own needs -- such as for a healing when I am ill, or for reduced pain when I am suffering.

Many years ago, on a Sunday morning when I was scheduled to give the service in our Ananda temple, I was suddenly struck by a violent kidney stone attack. My whole body was trembling like the leaves on a tree in a high wind. A friend pleaded with me to let him take me to a hospital. The mere thought of that winding, hilly road, however, and of the half-hour it would take to reach our destination, was agony enough. Unable even to speak, I shook my head, indicating that I simply couldn't go.

So there I crouched, trembling. The morning service was scheduled for eleven o'clock: an hour and a half away. I simply didn't know what to do. I couldn't speak; I couldn't even think clearly. So -- I suffered in silence. That was the greatest pain I have ever experienced.

At last I managed to glance down at my watch. A quarter to eleven! I hadn't wanted to bother God with a plea for help, but when I realized that in fifteen minutes I was expected by a roomful of people, I finally said to God, "Divine Mother (that is how I usually think of 'Him'), if You want me to give that service You're going to have to do something about it!"

Unbelievably, almost like breath fading from steel, the pain vanished from my body and was replaced by an equally intense joy! I did give the service, but the joy I was feeling was so great that, even now, I could hardly speak at all! People thought I must be weeping for pain, but I was completely pain-free: only an overwhelming, exquisite joy filled my heart and my whole body.

Still, you see, I didn't pray for myself: I prayed to be able to serve those people if God wanted me to. I have held to this principle throughout my life of discipleship.

He: I do see your point, and hope I won't forget it. Still, when crises arise ... well, I'll have to wait and see! Here's another point: I find my self-confidence failing in situations where I'm expected to "produce" -- such as to speak in public, or to express my ideas before a group of people even that is small in number. Under such circumstances, I certainly do pray to God for help -- desperately! But I'm so worried about the impression I'll make that, I'm afraid, as I speak, the thought of Him gets rather crowded out of my mind.

I: I've been told that speaking in public ranks among the activities that cause people the greatest nervousness. Strange to say, this is something I have never felt, personally, though I've given thousands of lectures.

Many years ago I mentioned this fact to a sister disciple, who responded with disdain. I could almost hear her thinking, "What's the use of saying anything? My God, what an EGO!" I really didn't know what to say, so I remained silent. I suppose I figured it might help me spiritually to accept her judgment of me, and that therefore it wasn't really such a bad thing for her to hold that negative opinion of me. But the truth is, the absence of nervousness I'd told her about had nothing to do with self-confidence. In fact, my real fault was self-doubt, which of course deprived me of any self-confidence I might have had!

What I've always done, however, and it has helped me also as a public speaker, is to keep in mind a "worst case scenario." I've said to myself, "What am I afraid of? Isn't it the thought that people might think me a fool? Very well then, I'll just accept that maybe I am a fool! If that's really my problem, what concern should it be of mine that others find out about it? Whatever is, simply is. Supposing I am a fool: In that case, let me accept that as the reality I have to work with. I can only begin with what is."

If in any other way I turn out to have bungled anything, well, I'll certainly try my best the next time, but all I can do, even then, is leave the matter in God's hands. I can't be responsible for being something I'm not. My only responsibility is to do my best, trying always to improve. "Nature," as the saying goes, "never makes sudden leaps." What others think of me is their business, not mine.

When I was assigned to work with my fellow monks in constructing India Center, in Hollywood, I was -- shall we say? -- not the perfect fit for the job. As a carpenter I was just about hopeless. I would strike at a nail nine times with a hammer before finally succeeding in hitting it. And then I usually gave the nail a glancing blow which only bent it. After minutes of this, a sort of blanket of despair would descend over me. I'd breathe deeply and affirm, "I can do it!" then try again (but just as ineffectually, I'm afraid).

I remember at the end of the job telling our hired foreman, "I've learned a lot on this job, Andy." He gave me one of "those looks," then, choosing the safe path, said nothing! The truth is, I did feel good -- not only because the job was over, but because I'd done my poor best. No one could have asked more of me than that.

He: Some of the books I've read tell me to visualize myself doing a good job. Might it have helped you to try to visualize yourself as a good carpenter?

I: Probably. However, I confess carpentry has never been my ambition. Moreover, the job didn't last long enough for me to tune into it as a big issue. But I do agree with you, if there is anything one wants to do really well, he should make it an issue. Most of a person's ability to succeed at anything comes from attuning himself to whatever state of consciousness most closely resonates with success in that field.

Our guru one time, as the young director of his school at Ranchi, hired a well-known artist to paint a portrait of his param-guru (guru's guru), Lahiri Mahasaya. When the job was completed, Yogananda's reaction to it was that, although the painting showed artistic competence, the artist had not captured the spirit of that great master.

"How long did it take you to master your craft?" our Guru asked him.

"Twenty years," was the response.

"You mean it took you twenty years to convince yourself you could paint?" Yogananda was implying that this was all the man had managed to do; he hadn't merged his self-consciousness in his art.

Well, as you might imagine, the man was indignant. No doubt his thought was, "At least I've earned my reputation!" In outrage he exclaimed, "I'd like to see you learn to paint as well in twice that length of time!"

"Give me a week," came the unexpected, but calm, reply.

The artist, considering this a deliberate insult, refused to say anything more and left the room in a huff.

The young guru went to a local artists' supply shop, bought a set of paints and brushes, and set to work on creating another painting. His first few attempts were unsuccessful. Each time he failed, however, he tried again more carefully, gradually attuning himself to the skill required for the task. After a week, the new painting was finished. The Master hung it up, and then had the artist invited to visit.

As the older man entered the room, the first thing he saw was the new painting. "Who painted that?" he cried in astonishment. "It's better than the one I did." The Master, who had been hiding behind a door, came out at that point and said, "You really want to know? I did it myself!" (One can see, here, that this man had at least the humility to admit that the new painting was better than his own. Yogananda, I suspect, had felt his sincerity, and therefore took the trouble to show him the importance of concentrating more on the deed than on oneself as the doer!)

So you see, you must bring God into your work. Don't just pray, "Make me successful." Say, rather, "Guide me, that I understand how to do better whatever it is I do."

I grant you, in my "carpentry days" those bent nails were an indication of the fact that I wasn't tuning in as I should have done. No doubt I ought to have tried harder. Actually, my thought -- quite reprehensible -- was, "What am I doing here?"

Whenever I've really wanted to do something well, I've found that by asking God to guide my understanding, rather than asking for the blessing to succeed, I've done many things for which no experience could have prepared me better. I've found, moreover, that by tuning in to what was needed the answers simply came to me, almost without effort.

Strange as it may seem, I've never had much confidence in myself about anything. Writing, I suppose, might be considered an exception: I've always known I could write. At the age of nine I was already writing dramatic dialogue. When I was seven years old, my parents criticized something I'd written for school. They told me, "You've used the word 'and' too often." I'm quite sure they were right. What I find intriguing, however, is that my first thought (which I didn't express) was, "Who is anyone, to tell me how to write?" It is probably safe to say that my self-confidence here, though unjustified, was a memory carried over from a previous incarnation. I should add, however, that this was the only exception I remember to my usual lack of self-confidence.

On the one hand, I've always been certain I could do well anything I set my mind to -- not because I considered myself particularly adept, but because, instead of holding the thought hopelessly, "I can't do that!" I've told myself, "Even though I don't see how I can do that, I know God can do anything, even through the poorest instrument!"

When I was asked, years ago, to write a book for Ananda's twentieth anniversary in 1988, my schedule was such that I only had one week free to write it; after that, I had other commitments. I replied, "I'm so sorry. I know it would be a good thing, and I would like to do it, but it just isn't possible." The person repeated her request, almost more in affirmation than in regret. "It would," she said, "be wonderful."

Well, I knew she was right. With regret I repeated my statement that there just wasn't anything I could do about it. Afterward, however, I suddenly thought, "It's true I myself can't do it, but God can do anything! Let me open the flood-gates and see what flows out." Banishing all

doubt as to my own ability, I sat down and, not affirming that I myself could do it, simply let come from God what would come.

Ideas, and the right words in which to clothe those ideas, simply poured through my fingertips onto the computer keys. Satan must have been interested in the proceedings, for toward the end of the second day someone working on the electricity inadvertently threw an electric switch: I lost that entire day's output. This loss so discouraged me that I stopped work altogether, and thereby lost another whole day of work. But then I summoned up my flagging will power and plunged in once again. I was able, in spite of the time limitation, and even with a whole day of lost work and another day of obliterated will power, to get the book written within that week. Unbelievably (to me), after the book was written it required almost no editing. *Cities of Light*, the product, has sold well over the years.

So here, for the devotee, is an important solution to the problem of lack of self-confidence. If you think, "I don't see how I can do it," remind yourself, "but God can do anything!"

The matter goes even deeper than that: It shows that lack of self-confidence can actually be an aid, not a hindrance, to successful accomplishment. Accepting one's own incompetence frankly will dismiss from one's mind the whole agonizing process: "Can I? How can I? What experience have I had to make the job even remotely possible? Couldn't others do it better? There's no use in even considering it; I'd only make myself a laughingstock if I tried!"

Remember the formula: "I can't, but God, through me, can do anything!" How many times have I found my solution in that simple thought! In fact, one consequence has been that my own deep-seated self-doubt, brought over from past lives, and its accompanying lack of self-confidence, have been important keys to what perhaps few would deny has been a successful life. That lack of belief in myself, directed outward from myself, has resulted in finishing innumerable projects simply because, in self-forgetfulness, I was able to concentrate one-pointedly on the projects themselves.

Public speaking? I said earlier that I've never been nervous in public. The reason, again, has not been self-confidence, but the complete lack of it. My initiation into public speaking was surely as dramatic as anyone might wish for.

I was still only twenty-two years old. Eight months earlier, in September, 1948, I'd been accepted by Paramhansa Yogananda as his disciple. One morning the following May, to my dismay, the message came down that I was to take the Master's place in giving the Sunday morning service at our church in San Diego, California.

As it happened, I knew this was expected to be an important day by the parishioners. Yogananda had been giving the services there on alternate Sundays. For the past two months, however, he'd been unable to go. The members of the congregation had been told to check the

newspaper every Saturday morning to see whether he'd appear in church the next morning. This time, the announcement had gone out that he would be speaking. (I knew this was the case, for part of my job was to send out those announcements to the papers.)

Early Saturday morning, a senior minister knocked on the door of my room to announce that I was to give the service the next day in Master's stead. I was also told that Master wanted me to initiate someone into Kriya Yoga, a ceremony I'd attended so far only once, five months earlier.

I made the 100-mile journey south by bus from Los Angeles. I'll spare you most of this gruesome story and only relate that, when the curtain opened on the stage that next morning, to reveal this callow youth standing there instead of the great Guru everyone was expecting, a tangible shock went through the whole congregation. The church was full to overflowing. People outside were craning their necks to look in through the windows. A grey cloud seemed to descend upon the room.

Strange as it may seem, I wasn't nervous. Slightly apprehensive, yes, but I was so keenly aware of the letdown everyone was experiencing that I could only pity them; I hadn't energy left over to feel sorry for myself.

Well, but that's another key for overcoming lack of self-confidence: Lose yourself in the thought of (or, in my case, in my concern for) the people, or of the job at hand. Don't make a big issue of getting yourself out of the way: simply focus all your attention on what needs to be done, and on the people you're serving.

I've found it very helpful to focus also on that "worst case scenario." I've imagined the results that might loom before me as the most dreadful. Then I've asked myself, "Well, so what else? Such things happen, and most people manage somehow to survive them." Even death, when it comes, is not really the end of very much: just of another phase of existence. Thus, even if death should be the outcome of that "worst case scenario," think to yourself, "What of it?" Death will have to come some day, so why not prepare yourself for it now? With that thought in mind, I've found I can relax and forget all about being nervous.

I should add that it does take a certain firmness of resolution to entertain such thoughts as these. A brother monk in the monastery was going through a period of inward testing. He would come into my room as though surrounded by a sort of dark cloud, sit heavily on my bed as I worked at my desk, and gaze at me lugubriously. Then he'd utter a despairing sigh as if on the point of announcing Doomsday. One day -- sincerely, I wanted to encourage him; I hadn't weighed the consequences as I should have done -- I said to him, "Cheer up, N----, this can't last more than the rest of one lifetime!" Well, I soon realized my mistake. Gloom settled over the poor fellow for weeks.

In my autobiography, *The Path*, I've told another story about "worst case scenarios." I was studying for an exam late one evening at Haverford College when I heard footsteps stealing softly over the lawn outside my window. Smiling to myself, I thought, "It's time for the library to

close. No doubt one of my friends is coming from there and wants to give me a little surprise. He'll come in the front door afterward, and we'll have a good chuckle." To show him I was onto his game, I went to the window and looked out. The footsteps ran off hurriedly into the night. I smiled, sat down again, and waited in expectation of seeing my friend a few moments later.

No one came.

This was strange. Maybe -- the thought appeared, whimsically -- someone had wanted to shoot me. This idea only broadened my smile, for of course I didn't believe it for an instant.

About fifteen minutes later the same footsteps approached again, this time even more stealthily. "Strange," I thought. "None of my friends is this persistent at anything! Maybe someone does want to shoot me." Of course I didn't believe it, but I thought, "How can I find out? I must let him carry out his plan, and not interrupt it."

A foot was placed cautiously on the ledge outside my window. A hand grasped the metal railing outside. I kept my eyes fixed on my book, smiling to myself, and pretending not to notice anything.

Suddenly: a loud shot! I could hardly believe it had actually happened. As the ringing in my ears died down, I heard a car in the nearby parking lot start up and race away. Here indeed was a "worst case scenario"! I checked my body: not a wound. More than strange! I went to the window and checked the screening: not even a hole. What on earth could have happened? I sat down again and had a hearty laugh.

The following day I recalled that it had been Halloween. Some local boy, evidently, had wanted to frighten one of "those uppity college boys" by firing a blank pistol at him.

Well, this was perhaps too extreme an example of my willingness to accept the "worst case scenario," and I don't recommend that anyone treat his body with such insouciance. Still, at least this much of a moral might be drawn from that absurd episode: If there is something you can't help, why not see if you can bring yourself to accept any eventuality? Be reasonably cautious (as I'm afraid I wasn't), but if after that things turn out in a way that you might have considered regrettable, why not school your mind to accept an outcome you can't help? Doing so will contribute greatly to your own peace of mind.

It's sort of like -- was it the red or the white queen in Alice Through the Looking Glass, where time itself moved backward? Anyway, that lady suddenly cried out in dismay, "Oh! Oh!"

"What's the matter," asked Alice anxiously.

"I'm going to prick myself with a needle!" cried the queen.

A moment later she was calm again. Alice asked, "Why are you now so suddenly calm?"

"Oh, I pricked myself," came the nonchalant answer. It's happened. It's over. Why cry about it?

Often, people fear what will happen, but accept the thing calmly once it has happened. Thus, again, that "worst case scenario" can help as a visualization. Visualize that worst, then mentally accept it. Finally, simply move on. In this way you'll stop worrying about your competence, or lack of it, for anything.

(As a little boy I had a serious problem: a black panther would conceal itself under my bed at night. I hardly dared to put my feet down for fear of being seized by its iron jaws. Would my "worst case scenario" have worked in that case? Perhaps not. Well, this was a problem I never had to settle. I think what occurred must have been that the fearsome beast got discouraged one day, and crept out of the house while I was at breakfast.)

Basically, I think the reason I myself haven't had a problem with lack of self-confidence is not that I lacked it, but rather that I simply accepted that lack. I haven't had enough self-confidence even to bother about not having it. By accepting it, and telling myself that God, on the other hand, can supply every lack, I've always found there was nothing to worry about. If there's some quality I really didn't have, why not simply forget about it?

For instance, artificial hip replacements have made it quite impossible for me to run races or to go skiing (a sport I used to enjoy). Why fret about it? I might as well feel handicapped by my inability to fly through the air. What would be the use of such a worry? Human beings, unaided, simply can't fly: they haven't the necessary equipment. So let me direct my attention toward things that are possible.

Psmith, a creation of the comic writer P.G. Wodehouse, in addressing a classmate he's meeting for the first time, asks him, "Are you the Bully, the Pride of the School, or the Boy who is Led Astray and takes to Drink in Chapter Sixteen?"

I'm afraid I'm no stock character. In fact, I don't really know who I am. I've no special self-definition. For me, therefore, self-confidence simply isn't a problem. Whom is there that I'm to have confidence in?

Well, at this point you may ask: "Did the young man who was interviewing you earlier have any more questions for you?" I don't know. Perhaps I just left him standing on a corner somewhere, as I went stumbling off down the street, mumbling these further ideas to myself.

§§§

## **Developing and Improving the Voice, Yogananda**

A violinist knows that before he can become an accomplished player he must be equipped with a good violin bow, good dry violin cords, a good violin box, and last, but not least, the mental skill to produce good music by a harmonious contact of the bow and the violin. It is also true that a speaker or a singer must first become familiar with the four following factors involved in good singing and speaking before he can even begin his training.

How to use the breath in order to produce a harmonious sounds. As the bow properly used against the violin cords produces the right notes, so the breath used over the vocal cords in the right way produces the desired magnetic speech or magnetic songs.

The throat must be free from hoarseness caused by over use and must be protected from infection at all times. The proper use and care is very important.

The art of relaxing and tensing the vocal cords must be practice daily.

The art of gaining musical skill will come through will power, concentration, and the proper use of the vocal cords.

Just as the violin bow must be right for use on the violin, so also the knowledge of proper breathing is very necessary in speaking and singing. Just as the bow going up and down in countless ways over the violin cords produces the music, so also the habit-will-power-concentration-modulated-breath, playing up and down the vocal cords, produces the correct speech and music.

Practice the following breathing exercises for half an hour before speaking or singing, but do not think of the breath or breathing exercise during the act of speaking or singing. Inspiration must be the principal guiding force in speaking or singing. Inspiration is roused by the habit of being inspired and through concentration.

### **Breathing Exercise**

Sit calmly on a straight chair with spine erect and chin parallel to the ground. Keep mouth closed. Pout the thumb of your right hand on the right nostril and very slowly inhale through the left nostril, filling the lungs and expanding the diaphragm simultaneously, counting rapidly one to twenty-five. Then close the left nostril with the forefinger, hold the breath and count one to six or one to twelve. Then open the right nostril by removing the thumb, while keeping the left nostril closed with the forefinger. Then exhale slowly, counting one to twenty-five rapidly. Practice about 12 times in the morning on an empty stomach, as a matter of daily exercise, and half an hour or one hour before delivering a speech.

It is best to eat very little or nothing for at least one or two hours before public speaking or singing. It must be remembered that during the above breathing exercise, the lungs and abdomen must be simultaneously inflated during inhalation and deflated during exhalation. Those who do not practice breathing exercises often, breathe in short breaths and find the breath a hindrance during speaking or singing. Over-indulgence in all food and especially meats must be strictly avoided in order to stop the accumulation of waste tissues and quick heart action and consequent over-breathing. All public speakers and singers will find long walks, or regular moderate running very healthful in their professions.

### **To Strengthen The Lungs**

Stand erect, extend arms at right angles to the spine. Open palms. Slowly exhale, bringing palms together in front. Slowly inhale, tensing all body parts HIGH in pairs, such as both feet, then both calves, and so on from “down-up” and extending arms with clenched fists to the first position. Slowly relax all body parts similarly from “up-down” and exhale, slowly bringing palms together in front. Repeat at least 3 times. Relax and drop arms. Very important exercise.

### **To Strengthen The Chest**

It is slow but sure suicide to walk, sit, rest, talk, sit at a table, or lie down with a caved-in chest. The lung cells are starved thereby, and mal-adjustments of the vertebrae occur. It is absolutely necessary always to have the chest a little forward and the shoulder blades a little backward, even when leaning back against a chair for rest. Practice will relieve irksomeness.

Close your eyes. Very gently contract both sides of the chest. Put whole attention there while contracting them. Hold contraction, count 1 to 30. Then release contraction. Repeat 6 times, morning, noon and night.

Exposing chest to direct sunlight is found to be very beneficial. Slowly walk two miles a day. Remain outdoors as much as possible. Eat plenty of raw green vegetable sand thoroughly ground pecan nuts. Clearing throat and nose with mixture of half a teaspoonful of salt in a glass of water early in the morning and at noon, and just before going to bed, has been found very beneficial and refreshing.

### **The Care And Exercise Of The Throat**

The second factor in voice culture lies in the care and exercise of the throat, the mouth, the lungs, and the diaphragm. All public speakers should refrain from using sour pickles, sour lemons, and sour oranges. It is good to use a little honey after drinking orange juice. Frequent use of honey is very good. The use of raw ginger and rock candy is very good for the throat. Public speakers who talk for long hours at a time should lubricate their throats with rock candy and a small piece of ginger kept in the mouth, long before the time for the ordeal of speech-making. In fact, to hide a piece of flat rock candy and flat diced ginger between the teeth and the inner cheek during speech-making helps to keep the throat continuously lubricated when it is in constant action. Avoid sore throats through regular good habits and right living. Avoid colds by eating lightly at night and by eating more fruits and vegetables.

### **Best Exercise**

Put chin on chest, then stretch the muscles of the throat slowly, with the feeling that your chin is tied to the chest. Then slowly force the chin up, holding the tension of the throat while the head goes upward. Then relax quickly and drop the chin on chest. Repeat the above twelve times morning and night.

In public speaking one must not strain the vocal cords by speaking through the throat, or strain the lungs by speaking through the lungs. One must learn to start the breath and thought waves from the diaphragm and let the breath pass through the lungs and throat into mouth. The vocal cords must be used in speaking in loud or soft tones not by artificial exertion but by inspiration. Those who have no inspiration and try to impress their audience through loud speech, injure their vocal cords. Deep inspiration should produce soft tones. Inspiration should be the guiding force of the vocal cords. All sounds must be produced through the mouth, inspired by the strength of the abdomen, diaphragm, lungs, and breath trained according to the above-mentioned methods.

### **The Cure Of “Stage-Fright”**

Remember, if you, by calmness, can prevent the regular visitation of psychological nervousness, you will never suffer from the more serious and long-continued forms of nervousness. Stage –fright is a form of fear which causes nervousness in many people, so that they are never able to do anything naturally. If you are shy and have stage-fright, get your mind quiet and remember that all the power you need is within you, all the power to convince people, all the power to give the direct truth. The particular kind of truth that you want to give is in the Infinite Spirit, which functions through you. Overcome stage-fright:

1. By getting used to talking to groups.

2. By imaging whenever you give a talk that you are addressing an empty hall, or that you are talking to children, or very simple people.

Realize that all power to think, to speak, and to act comes from God, and that He is with you now, guiding and inspiring you. As soon as you actually realize that, a flash of illumination will come and fear will leave you. Sometimes the power of God comes like an ocean and surges through your Being in great boundless waves, sweeping away all obstacles. Feel that God talks through you whenever you want to speak.

### **Exercise To Strengthen The Nerves**

Inhale; hold breath. Contract entire body all at once gently. Hold contraction, counting 1 to 20, with deep attention upon entire body. Then exhale. Release contraction. Repeat 3 times, or any time you feel weak and nervous.

### **Tonic For Nerves**

Some of the physical methods of overcoming nervousness as taught in India are, first, a soothing drink made of fresh limes. It is made in this way: To one glass of water add the juice of one-quarter of a fresh lime and about a tablespoonful of sugar, or powdered rock candy. Stir thoroughly, and add a little crushed ice. It is difficult to give exact measurements because of the difference in the size of limes, but it should not taste at all like the ordinary limeade bought at soda fountains. That is far too strong. This drink should be blended so that the sweetness and sourness are equal and you cannot distinguish which you are tasting. Ground rock candy is even better than sugar, but do not use honey. If properly blended, every nerve will feel calm. Sipping two or three glasses of this during nervousness has been found to be extremely beneficial. If you have too much lime or too much sugar, it will not produce the result. The blending must be equal.

### **Perfect Technique Must Be Accompanied By Soul Inspiration**

The daily practice of specially selected graded vocal exercises is highly important in the development of the speaking and singing voice. A great thing in voice culture consist in using concentration to learn the technique of speaking or singing. In a closed room with deep concentration try to very intelligently and inspirationally speak or sing extemporaneously to an invisible audience. Try to apply the technique of correct speaking and singing during your practices before an invisible audience.

The technique of speaking and singing must be practiced without fault or blemish. After that is accomplished, inspiration, concentration, self-confidence, and emotion will guide the technique. In other words, inspiration must be the outstanding power behind the speech of the speaker and the song of the singer. As there is no excuse for a faulty halting speech or a faulty technique in singing, so also, speaking or singing with perfect technique but without Soul inspiration and Soul originality are inexcusable.

*--From Pracepta Lessons di Paramhansa Yogananda*

§§§

### **Pay attention to the tones of your voice, Swami Kriyananda**

Have you ever noticed how instantly your vocal tones reflect your psychological or emotional states? Jesus Christ said, "Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh." I've often wondered whether his reference wasn't to the very tones of a person's speech.

For the slightest mood shift betrays itself instantly. Irritation creates a tightening of the vocal cords. Love relaxes them. Tenderness, good humor, pride, enthusiasm, amusement, weakness, strength—all these and many more are reflected instantly in an alteration in the tones of your voice. If you haven't noticed these nuances, listen carefully the next time you or someone else speaks. By simply changing your tone of voice, you can actually improve a negative attitude.

I've often thought that singing teachers leave the greater body of true teaching on this subject unspoken by telling their students to develop only the sounding board of their bodies. The body's usefulness in this respect is merely that it can produce a loud sound, thereby filling a concert hall. This ability is no longer really necessary, now that superbly crafted microphones and loudspeaker systems reproduce the human voice so well. The difficulty with operatic technique is that it is difficult to shout, even melodiously, and at the same time express the subtle nuances of thought and feeling.

In a concert hall, it isn't always easy to tell, without a program before you, whether the famous opera singer is letting loose with a love ballad or summoning the troops to arms with a marching song. It is necessary to bellow in either case, simply to be heard in the back row. (And pity the poor heroine upon whose ear the tenor must inflict his love ballads, shattering the peace.)

There is a subtler "sounding board" than the physical body. It consists of certain centers of energy within the body. Love, for example, emanates from the spinal region just behind the heart. Concentrate there, and you will find that you can give greater vocal expression to the love you feel.

### **Calmness emanates from the cervical region just behind the throat.**

Will power and joy emanate from the forehead, between the eyebrows. That is why people frown when expressing will power, or raise their eyebrows when feeling joy.

Try focusing the energy of your voice in the region of the heart. Then lift the sound up through the cervical region to the brain, and thence out through the forehead.

I wish I could go into this teaching more deeply here. The only way really to teach it, however, would be in person. On the other hand, people may also understand something of it by listening to recordings of my voice, which reflects, perhaps, my lifelong study of this subject.

To conclude, remember, the way you say a thing is every bit as important as what you say.

*--From Expansive Marriage, Chapter 9*

§§§

## **Secrets of Winning People, Swami Kriyananda**

### **Originally Secrets Of Persuasion**

- to be deeply convinced, first, of the truth of your proposal.
- enthusiasm for the truth as you perceive it. But remember, enthusiasm is not excitement. It is deep conviction.
- never telling an untruth, but letting sincerity take such deep root within you that your simple word carries conviction.
- addressing the issues calmly, never emotionally or excitedly. To put it otherwise: When trying to persuade someone, use adjectives sparingly.
- creating a relaxed atmosphere, for tension induces resistance to new ideas, whereas relaxation fosters receptivity.
- to present points of mutual agreement before proceeding to your central theme.
- to remain calm under attack, and withhold recognition from comments that are made simply to offend.
- to be convinced that the other person, too, wants to arrive at the truth.
- desiring that the truth prevail, and being willing to change your mind instantly, should the facts of a matter prove you wrong.
- seeing yourself as the other person's friend and well-wisher.

- putting yourself in the other person's shoes; considering his point of view (whether or not you refer to it) before you present your own.
- concentrating on the other person's needs, not your own.
- under-emphasizing the pronoun, "I."
- appealing to a person's altruism; convincing him of the universal benefits of your proposal.
- to refrain from making leaps of logic for which your listeners are not prepared.
- having the patience to let others come to your position in their own time. (Reflect, it probably took you time, too, to arrive there.)
- responsiveness to alternative suggestions.
- helping a person to convince himself, and not overwhelming him with your enthusiasm.
- to enter into your subject wholeheartedly, with full concentration; making your every word count.
- creativity and spontaneity; not holding fixedly to anything you've prepared to say.
- magnetism; projecting your convictions with equivalent energy.
- never to accept a defensive position. If attacked for your ideas, counter good-humoredly, but with conviction. Never make excuses for anything in which you sincerely believe.
- never belittling the opinions, however uninformed, of those whom you are seeking to convince.
- not pleading, to your listener's disadvantage, your own greater knowledge or experience, but letting crystal clarity be your sole defense.
- to support your statements with qualified evidence, and avoid such vague claims as, "Lots of people say so."
- to keep the discussion as closely to the issues as possible.
- to concentrate on presenting solutions, and not diminish the energy of your presentation by dwelling lengthily on the problems.
- to introduce your point early, and not keep your listeners in suspense, lest tension build up within them, making them resistant to your ideas.
- in any difference of opinion, to look for points of agreement, and not resort to criticism or accusation.
- not concealing counter-arguments, but presenting them fairly, then placing them in the context of a broader truth.
- forging lasting, not brittle, bonds with people, lest, even in victory, you lose their esteem and loyalty.

§§§

## **Shivani's secrets of teaching**

I begin by writing all of my thoughts on a piece of paper—all of them, whether they are good or not good. I don't judge them, and I don't try to limit them. Certainly there is never time to say everything, but I find it helpful to get everything out of my head. I include every story I can think of that could in any way, even remotely, relate to the subject.

Then I meditate. It is a very special kind of meditation in which I try with all my heart and concentration to transform myself completely into Master. I pray and get all the worries and negative thoughts out of the way—like "I'm not really good enough to be doing this," "Isn't there someone else more spiritually evolved whom you could ask?" And then I tell him that if this is what he really wants, then he needs to make a really big transformation in me.

I start with his eyes and I see them looking at me and into me. And I open the door of my consciousness and let him in; and I ask him to look out from inside me so that I can see things as he does. Then my eyes become his eyes and I feel him.

Then his face, that beatific smile, his hair. I feel them in me and see his face instead of my face. Then his body, his hands, his spine, everything—it comes inside. And there is no more me, only he.

Finally his breath. I ask him to purify me with his breath, through Kriya. Sometimes with every Kriya I pray: I seek purification by your grace. And when I bring the current down, I try to feel his grace descend and purify me everywhere. I try to do Kriya so deeply with his breath and his grace that there is no part of me that has not been touched by him.

At the end of the meditation, I ask him to inspire my thoughts so that I know exactly what to say that each person needs.

As soon as I finish the meditation, I look at the paper again, and I ask him to choose what he wants to say. I find that usually it is only about 10% of what is possible, because people cannot absorb too much at one time. They need enough to get them started, and they need to be stimulated and encouraged so that they do start. Then they will come back for more if they want it.

After that I go for a run. It is a very special kind of run. The whole time I do japa, repeating with the rhythm of my feet: Om Guru Om: Om Swamiji Om. I use different melodies, depending on my mood. With the japa I feel that my entire astral body is vibrating in harmony with their consciousness and their will. I also at this time see myself (now just a window for Master) in the class situation. I try to see the people and see their thoughts and hopes and disappointments. And I ask Master again to inspire me with what they need to hear at this moment. It is at this time that it all comes together for me.

The last part is when i come to the place of the class. I ask Master to lookout through my eyes and tell me what he sees and let me know what people need. I look at them, and I try to see God in them and I try to speak to the God in them. I ask Him to inspire in me the light, the love and the words that will help them change their lives.

Sometimes, I don't say anything that is on that paper; other times I say it all and more. If at the end I feel full of energy and love, then I know it was right.

And all of this is a secret between you and Master: no one else knows, although some people will feel it. It's most important that you feel it, even if no one else does.

§§§

## **Chapter Four: Researches on the Effects of Meditation**

### **The Brain – Engineered for Divinity, Peter van Houten, M.D.**

*Dr. Van Houten serves as Medical Director of the Sierra Family Medical Clinic and is a longtime resident of Ananda Village. This article was originally published in Ananda's Clarity Online Magazine, March 2003 Daily Meditator*

In the early 1980's, I attended a revolutionary conference for scientists who specialize in the brain and nervous system called, "The Ever-changing Brain." New information was being discovered about the nature of our brain and central nervous system that corroborated strongly with what the ancient spiritual traditions of yoga said about the brain's ability to change. According to the old scientific model in the West the brain didn't change much during a person's lifetime. The brain developed through childhood and adolescence and somewhere around age twenty, it was thought, our brain cells began to die off without being replaced. After that, it was a race to see how many brain cells you would lose before you died! It was pretty grim.

At this conference, we were presented with hard scientific data to show that the brain isn't a static, "fixed-in-concrete" organ. In some of the very early experiments, researchers found that not only does the brain change in response to how it's being used but responds vigorously by changing both its structure and its function. We've known for centuries that if you were not in the habit of exercising and you began lifting weights or performing some other form of vigorous physical activity, your muscles will begin to increase in size and will become stronger. Likewise, it was found, with the brain that it changes its structure and function depending on how it's used.

For example, suppose you decided one day that you wanted to become a world-class musician, but you had never previously studied music. How is your brain going to help you respond to your new musical interest? It does so in several ways. In that part of the brain concerned with music, brain cells begin to increase in number. Secondly, the interconnections between the cells in that part of the brain also increase dramatically. Thirdly, brain cells located near the musically related area are "recruited" to help with musical abilities. Imagine a computer automatically increasing its (RAM) random access memory. A computer can't do this unless you buy a new RAM memory chip. But the brain, because of its ability to change, makes the necessary changes automatically!

Two important areas of the brain of particular interest to yogis are the frontal lobes in the area of the forehead right above the eyebrows, and the limbic system deep inside the brain. How those two areas function influence greatly who you are: your behavior, your thinking, and what you're going to do with your life. We can see on brain scans that when brain function in these areas is abnormal, a person's behavior tends also to be abnormal.

The limbic system is a primitive portion of the brain, present in both humans and lower animals, associated with survival instincts and basic primitive emotions such as rage, fear or aggression. An animal knowing how to nurture its young or defend its territory, are limbic system functions. The human brain also has a number of these built-in instinctual functions. Brain scans show that when people get very frightened, upset, or angry, the cells in the limbic system start firing wildly. Fear of heights, for example, is related to over activity of the limbic system where a person becomes extremely anxious and out of control on a ladder or a high ledge.

The frontal lobes, located in the forehead, are the most anterior portion of the brain. The most important portion of this area is called the pre-frontal lobes. They are the most evolved part of the human brain but found in a very limited way in just a few of the animals such as dolphins.

Human happiness and ability to enjoy life is very much dependent on the function of our pre-frontal lobes. This area also seems to be associated with many of our best qualities such as idealism, joy, our ability to concentrate, creativity, and our ability to think abstractly. For example, the saying, "a stitch in time saves nine." People with normal pre-frontal lobes understand what that means: you save time and energy by doing a thing preventively. But a person who does not have normally functioning frontal lobes can't abstract the underlying meaning and might answer, "I don't know, maybe T should fix my pants?" He wouldn't be able to make the mental leap to abstract from the phrase something more general.

As a primary care physician, I deal with peoples' everyday problems and often see patients who are clinically depressed. They lack energy or maybe they're anxious, or perhaps they're not enjoying life. They lack concentration, don't sleep well, or they have difficulty completing a task. They tend to be obsessed by negative thoughts. A brain scan would likely show their pre-frontal lobes to be very quiet while the primitive part of their brain, the limbic system, overactive.

One of my depressed patients described to me what it feels like to have his frontal lobes asleep and limbic system overactive. He said, "I feel as if I'm sitting in my car and the gear shift is in neutral, so I'm not going anywhere; but I have my foot all the way down on the gas, and the engine is going so fast it's about to explode." This description seemed to capture for me what it feels like to have one's limbic system revved up "with no place to go" while the frontal lobes are asleep. It's not surprising that depressed people often feel miserable and are disabled.

With this understanding of the brain structure, it raises the basic question, "What can we do to improve ourselves and become a better person?" The brain is very responsive and will change if we point it in the right direction. If we choose to be violent, our brain will respond by changing in ways that make us more violent and coarse. On the other hand, if we choose a life of compassion and kindness, our brains will respond by helping us to manifest those qualities.

Anything that makes us more restless or moody could decrease our pre-frontal lobe function and over-stimulate our limbic system. We certainly see this in children who watch a lot of TV. It seems to have a detrimental effect on their nervous system consistent with poor pre-frontal lobe function and increased limbic system activity, opposite the direction we want to go,

if our goal is to be joyful, calm, and centered. In people who are the most mature and happy, we see evidence of a person with a quiet limbic system and energized pre-frontal lobes.

I think it's great that we have this built-in safety net of a limbic system inside us. If we're not ready to take control of our lives, we have this automatic instinctual system to keep us out of trouble. But as soon as we decide to step up to the plate and be "super-human" or "super-conscious" we can do that, too. There are very specific ways of doing this.

In the early 1970's, as a young researcher out of college, I was involved in one of the first scientific studies done on meditation. We were trying to answer the basic question: is meditation different from sleep? At that time the prevailing idea was that when people sat to meditate, they simply went to sleep! Part of our research was to study physiological changes in the body and brain during meditation to see whether this was true or not. This was my introduction to the topic of meditation.

In carefully controlled experiments, we had people meditate inside a Plexiglas box, about the size of a phone booth, hooked up to many different instruments. In this way, we could monitor oxygen consumption, brain wave patterns, heart function, and blood chemistry. Not surprisingly, we found that meditation is very different from sleep! We discovered that peoples' heart rate went down, their blood pressure dropped, oxygen consumption fell by as much as 50%, and their blood chemicals changed. In addition, their brain wave patterns also changed to one significantly different from sleep. We found that many stress hormones fell to lower than usual levels during meditation as people developed an anti-stress or relaxation response and gained the ability to enter a hypo-metabolic, or deeply relaxed state, at will.

We know a lot more about the effects of meditation now than in the early 1970's. We now know that there is a tremendous interaction between the limbic system and prefrontal lobes. The basic interaction is this: as the pre-frontal lobes become stronger, the limbic system becomes quieter. Meditation energizes the pre-frontal lobes and, in time, the limbic system becomes harder to arouse. This results in behavioral changes including better ego integrity, fewer minor psychological problems, less depression and anxiety, and better social skills. Such people tend to have better anger management, more self-control, and tend to be more creative—clearly positive things!

Another thing that has been demonstrated is that long-time meditators have better control over bodily functions that are usually considered involuntary. In a biofeedback experiment, test subjects were asked to raise the temperature of their left index finger by ten degrees. Long-time meditators learned to do that, on average, quite a bit faster than non-meditators. The process of meditation tends to give people more control not only over their brain functions and physiology, but also over their "janitorial" and involuntary systems as well. It doesn't mean that such a person "doesn't react." It means simply that they have much more control over their reaction!

One of the complexities of studying meditation is that there are so many different meditation techniques, and all research tends to be lumped together. The good news is that most meditation techniques have similar effects on the body. There are subtle differences and over the next thirty years we will probably learn what they are. The meditation techniques we practice at Ananda and the techniques of most spiritual paths focus on energizing the pre-frontal lobes of the brain, either by concentrating the point between the eyebrows or by doing a technique that promotes this even if one is not necessarily concentrating there directly. Paramhansa Yogananda actually said that when you practice the techniques of Kriya Yoga, you are energizing the frontal part of the brain.

As Americans, we like to have things proven to us. Now there is proof to corroborate precisely what Yogananda and the yogic tradition have said about the pre-frontal lobes and how that agrees with recent discoveries in modern science and medicine. It's no longer like it was 25 or 30 years ago when we could only say, "Meditation will make you a better person." Now we can say, "Meditation will make you a better person and here are the studies to prove it."

*--Peter van Houten, M.D.*

§§§

## Research on Stress, Health and Meditation, David Gamow

### STRESS AND HEALTH - Compiled by David Gamow

Harvard researchers believe that 60-90% of doctor's visits are caused by stress.<sup>1</sup> Stress is linked to heart attacks, hypertension, diabetes, asthma, chronic pain, allergies, headache, backache, various skins disorders, cancer, accidents, suicide, depression, immune system weakness, and decreases in the number of white blood cells and changes in their function.<sup>2</sup>

#### Heart disease

\* People who suffer from chronic stress at work have an increased risk of developing heart disease and diabetes. Men who held stressful jobs for more than 14 years were almost twice as likely to have insulin intolerance, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and be obese than those not exposed to consistent stress.<sup>3</sup>

*--British Medical Journal*

\* Stress is more powerful than diet in influencing cholesterol levels. Several studies—including one of medical students around exam time, and another of accountants during tax season — have shown significant increases in cholesterol levels during stressful events, when there was little change in diet.<sup>4</sup>

*--Homeostasis in Health and Disease*

\* Severe stress may be a potent risk factor for stroke even 50 years after the initial trauma. In a study of 556 veterans of WWII, the rate of stroke among those who had been prisoners of war was 8 times higher than among those not captured.<sup>5</sup>

*--Yale Medical School*

\* Men with above-average blood pressure spikes in response to a stressful life event (in the case of the study, an exercise test) had a 72% greater risk of stroke, compared to men with less reactive blood pressures. These men also had an 87% greater risk of ischemic stroke — those caused by blood clots rather than bursting of a brain vessel.<sup>6</sup>

*--Hypertension (Journal of the American Heart Association)*

\* Stress appears to increase atherosclerosis. Couples with no history of heart trouble who were hostile or domineering in their interactions were more likely to have tiny calcium deposits in coronary arteries, an early sign of arterial damage. The more anger and stress in their relationships, the more severe the atherosclerosis tended to be.<sup>7</sup>

*--Psychosomatic Medicine*

\* Common emotions such as tension, frustration, and sadness, trigger frequent and painless heart abnormalities that can lead to permanent heart damage. Study results show a direct, cause-and-effect relationship between negative emotions, an inadequate flow of blood to the heart, and increased risk of heart attack.<sup>8</sup>

*--Journal of the American Medical Association*

\* In response to stress, the adrenal glands release epinephrine, which in turn stimulates blood platelets (the cells responsible for repairing blood vessels) to secrete ATP. In large amounts, ATP can trigger a heart attack or stroke by causing blood vessels to rapidly narrow, thus cutting off blood flow.<sup>9</sup>

*--New York Hospital, Cornell Medical Center*

### **Immune system**

\* Stress appears to dramatically increase the ability of chemicals to pass through the blood-brain barrier, which normally protects the brain from toxins in the bloodstream. During the Gulf War, Israeli soldiers took a drug called pyridostigmine to protect themselves from chemical and biological weapons. Nearly 25% reported headaches, nausea, and dizziness — symptoms which occur only if the drug reaches the brain. In subsequent experiments with mice, researchers confirmed that those under stress had significantly greater permeability of chemicals through the blood-brain barrier than previous thought possible. Many of today's drugs are developed under the assumption that they will not enter the brain.<sup>10</sup>

*--Hebrew University, Jerusalem*

\* Being under high levels of stress for more than a month doubles a person's risk of a cold. Stress lasting more than two years nearly quadruples the risk. Being unemployed or underemployed, or having interpersonal difficulties with relatives or friends, has the greatest influence on risk.<sup>11</sup>

*--Carnegie Mellon University*

\* Stress has been found to lower immune function. Several studies of medical students at exam time showed significant drops in the numbers and activity of natural killer cells (key in fighting cancer cells and viruses), and a significantly lower percentage of T-helper cells in the blood (cells that arouse the immune response to fight off an infection).<sup>12</sup>

*--Psychosomatic Medicine, Journal of Behavioral Medicine, and Psychiatry Research*

### **Aging**

\* Blood cells from women who had spent many years caring for a disabled child were, genetically, about a decade older than those from peers who had less caretaking responsibility. Severe emotional distress, like that caused by divorce, the loss of a job, or caring for an ill child or parent, appears to accelerate aging.<sup>13</sup>

*--Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*

## **Arthritis**

\* In a study of 100 people with rheumatoid arthritis, levels of prolactin were twice as high among those reporting high degrees of interpersonal stress than among those not stressed. Prolactin migrates to joints where it initiates a cascade of events leading to swelling and pain.<sup>14</sup>

*--Arizona State University*

## **Memory**

\* Stress can damage the brain's hippocampus, making it difficult to learn new things. Mice under stress continuously explored their surroundings, as if they had no ability to retain memory.<sup>15</sup>

*--University of South Florida*

\* Cortisol is produced by the body when under stress, and also increases with age, for reasons not yet known. People with high cortisol levels showed marked deficits in memory and a 14% decrease in the size of the hippocampus. Studies show that cortisol levels can be influenced by meditation and exercise, among other methods. Once they return to normal, memory ability returns well.<sup>16</sup>

*--Nature Neuroscience*

## **Mental health**

\* The percentage of Americans who report feeling close to having a serious nervous breakdown has increased from 17% of adults in 1957, when the survey was first conducted, to 26% in

## **Sleep**

\* Stress is one of the main causes of insomnia. More than 50% of American adults have insomnia a few nights a week or more. 25% suffer from chronic insomnia (occurring most nights and lasting a month or longer). 20% of adults experience daytime sleepiness severe enough to interfere with their daily activities a few days each week or more.<sup>18</sup>

*--National Sleep Foundation and Duke University Medical Center*

## **Stress in the Workplace**

Though it is difficult to quantify, researchers believe that stress is a significant cost to American business. The overall cost has been estimated at \$300 billion a year<sup>19</sup>, including absenteeism, additional health costs incurred by those under stress, turnover, Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) costs, disability, and accidents. A small example: in a study of 44 hospitals, those that implemented a hospital-wide stress reduction training program experienced a 50% drop in medical errors and a 70% reduction in malpractice claims. The control group of twenty-two hospitals showed no change.<sup>20</sup>

## **Employee perceptions of stress**

\* The percent of full- or part-time workers reporting high job stress rose to 45 percent in 2002, from 37 percent in 2001 and 26 percent in 1999.<sup>21</sup>

*--Yankelovich Monitor annual survey*

\* Thirty percent of adults report high job stress nearly every day. In one survey, more than a third of respondents were considering changing work because of job stress.<sup>22</sup>

*--Northwestern National Life Insurance*

## **Economic impact**

\* The cost of stress to business has been estimated at:

19% of absenteeism

40% of turnover

55% of Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)

30% of short-term disability and long-term disability costs

10% of drug plan costs

60% of the cost of workplace accidents

### *What Stress Costs*<sup>23</sup>

\* Individuals with stress and related disorders experience impaired physical and mental functioning, more work days lost, increased impairment at work, and a high use of health care services. The disability caused by stress is comparable to disability caused by workplace accidents and common medical conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, and arthritis.<sup>24</sup>

\* Health care expenditures are nearly 50% greater for workers who report high levels of stress.<sup>25</sup>

*--Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*

\* Workers who must take time off work because of stress, anxiety, or a related disorder will be off the job for approximately 20 days.<sup>26</sup>

*--Bureau of Labor Statistics*

## **Workplace stress and health**

\* Workers who spent most of their lives in a job in which they had little control (over things such as flexible hours and when to take a break) had a 43% increased risk of dying during their working life, as well as up to 10 years after they stopped working.<sup>27</sup>

*--Psychosomatic Medicine*

\* 90% of physiological and psychological diseases among police officers and supervisors is attributable to prolonged work stress.<sup>28</sup>

*--FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*

\* In a survey of real estate professionals, 62% of respondents routinely ended their workday with work-related neck pain. 44% reported fatigued eyes, 38% complained of hurting hands and 34% reported difficulty in sleeping. More than 50% of respondents said they often spend 12-hour days on work related duties and frequently skip lunch.<sup>29</sup>  
American Demographics

\* Unemployment tripled in Finland between 1991 and 1993. During this period and for seven years afterward, researchers followed municipal workers in four towns who survived the cutbacks. Those in work units with the most downsizing suffered twice the death rate from heart attack and stroke.<sup>30</sup>

*--British Medical Journal*

\* Air traffic controllers were found to have five times the incidence of hypertension compared to a control group in a less stressful occupation (second-class airmen).

*--Journal of the American Medical Association*

### **Meditation and health**

Hundreds of studies have been conducted on meditation and its effects on the body. Significant benefits have been found for many health conditions, including heart disease, cholesterol, high blood pressure, insomnia, chronic pain, cancer, and immunity. Research on meditation has also shown significant improvements in mental health, memory, concentration, and productivity. Since 1992, new technology has allowed more accurate assessment of effects in the brain. Because meditation is a low-cost intervention with no side-effects, it shows promise for relief of a wide range of societal and health problems.

### **Hospitalization**

\* In a study of health insurance statistics, meditators had 87% fewer hospitalizations for heart disease, 55% fewer for benign and malignant tumors, and 30% fewer for infectious diseases. The meditators consistently had more than 50% fewer doctor visits than did non-meditators.<sup>32</sup>

*--Psychosomatic Medicine*

\* Surgery patients who have learned simple relaxation and meditation techniques stay in the hospital an average of 1.5 days (12%) fewer than those in the control group. Results included faster recovery from surgery, fewer complications, and reduced postsurgical pains. This finding was consistent in 191 independent studies.<sup>33</sup>

*--University of Wisconsin, School of Nursing*

## Heart disease

\* Patients recovering from heart attacks took a six-hour program of stress management training with mind/body techniques and emotional support. The result was a 50% reduction in subsequent rate of cardiac deaths.<sup>34</sup>

--*Psychosomatic Medicine*

\* Meditation lowers blood pressure in people who are normal to moderately hypertensive. This finding has been replicated by more than nineteen studies, some of which have shown systolic reductions among their subjects of 25 mmHg or more.<sup>35</sup>

--*The Physical and Psychological Effects of Meditation*

Stress management appears to be as beneficial as aerobic exercise in preventing major cardiac events. A group receiving standard care turned out to have the most cardiac events, such as heart attacks, open-heart surgery, and angioplasty. The group that studied stress management had fewer problems—equal to that of the aerobics group.<sup>36</sup>

--*American Journal of Cardiology*

\* Meditation may reduce atherosclerosis. In a study of 60 men and women over seven months, those practicing meditation showed a decrease of .098 millimeter in arterial wall thickness — an 11% decrease in the risk of heart attack and a 7.7 to 15% reduction in the risk of stroke. The non-meditating control group showed an increase of .054 millimeter in wall thickness.<sup>37</sup>

--*Stroke (Journal of the American Heart Association)*

\* Twenty-eight people with high levels of blocked arteries and high risk of heart attack were placed a program with regular practice of meditation, yoga, a low-fat vegetarian diet, and exercise. Twenty people in the control group received conventional medical care endorsed by the AMA. At the end of a year, most of the experimental group reported that their chest pains had virtually disappeared; in 82% of the patients, arterial clogging had reversed. Those who were sickest at the start showed the most improvement. The control group had an increase in chest pain and arterial blockage worsened. (Follow-up studies suggest that the stress-reduction element may be the most significant factor in achieving these results.)<sup>38</sup>

--*The Lancet*

\* Numerous studies have shown increases in circulation during meditation. Forearm blood flow increased in novice meditators by 30%. Frontal cerebral blood flow increased an average of 65% in experienced meditators, and remained elevated afterwards, with brief increases of up to 100-200%.<sup>39</sup>

--*The Physical and Psychological Effects of Meditation*

\* Patients with ischemic heart disease who practiced meditation for four weeks achieved significant reduction in the frequency of pre-ventricular contractions. (Ischemic heart disease is decreased blood to the heart muscle that results in anginal chest pain and heart attacks).<sup>40</sup>

*--The Lancet*

\* A group of patients who were trained in meditation and received angioplasty procedures showed significantly less anxiety, pain, and need for medication. In patients receiving heart surgery, the meditators had significantly lower incidence of postoperative rapid heart rate than the control group.<sup>41</sup>

*--Behavioral Medicine*

\* Three groups of heart patients were given usual care, exercise therapy, or stress management training. Patients in the exercise group and usual care group averaged 1.3 cardiac events by the fifth year of follow-up (bypass surgery, angioplasty, heart attack or death). Those in the stress management group averaged only 0.8 cardiac events.<sup>42</sup>

*--American Journal of Cardiology*

### **Chronic pain**

\* Meditation and relaxation therapies are effective in treating chronic pain, and can markedly ease the pain of low back problems, arthritis, and headaches.<sup>43</sup>

*National Institutes of Health (NIH)*

\* Those trained in meditation were able to reduce chronic pain by more than 50%. This gain was maintained even 4 years after the initial training.<sup>44</sup>

*Clinical Journal of Pain*

\* Chronic pain patients attended a ten-session outpatient mind/body program including meditation training. They were able to reduce total monthly clinic visits for pain management by 36% during the subsequent year.<sup>45</sup>

*The Clinical Journal of Pain*

## **Insomnia**

75% of long-term insomniacs who have been trained in relaxation, meditation, and simple lifestyle changes can fall asleep within 20 minutes of going to bed.<sup>46</sup>

*Harvard Medical*

\* Behavioral and relaxation techniques are more effective than sleeping pills in treating chronic sleep-onset insomnia. In addition, sleeping pills lose their effectiveness as soon as they are discontinued.<sup>47</sup>

*Archives of Internal Medicine*

## **Cancer**

\* The progression of prostate cancer can be slowed or perhaps even reversed by changes in diet and lifestyle alone. Researchers studied 93 early-stage prostate cancer patients who had chosen not to undergo conventional treatment but opted instead for a wait-and-see approach. The men were randomly placed into a lifestyle change group or a control group. The lifestyle patients were prescribed a vegan diet with fish oil and other supplements, moderate aerobic exercise, a daily 1-hour period of relaxation via techniques such as yoga-based meditation and weekly participation in a support group. After a year, 6 of the control group underwent treatment because of disease progression, in contrast to none of the lifestyle patients. When serum from both groups was administered to prostate tumor lines, that of the improved lifestyle group inhibited tumor growth by 70%, compared to 9% in the control group. 232,000 U.S. men each year are diagnosed with prostate cancer, and 30,000 die of the condition.<sup>48</sup>

*Journal of Urology*

\* Women who meditate and use guided imagery have higher levels of the immune cells known to combat tumors in the breast.<sup>49</sup>

*Reported in Time Magazine, "The Science of Meditation"*

## **Diabetes**

\* Meditation and relaxation may help diabetes. Those with type II diabetes who practiced meditation over 6 weeks showed significantly reduced blood sugar levels, compared to little or no change compared to the control group.<sup>50</sup>

*Dissertation Abstracts International*

## **Mental health**

\* A group of inner-city residents suffering from chronic pain, anxiety, depression, diabetes and hypertension were trained in meditation. They experienced a 50% reduction in overall psychiatric symptoms, a 70% decrease in anxiety, and a 44% reduction in medical symptoms.<sup>51</sup>

*Nurse Practitioner*

\* Meditation helped chronically depressed patients, reducing their relapse rate by half.<sup>52</sup>

*Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*

\* More than half of all patients who have had one or two episodes of clinical depression will relapse into another. The more episodes, the higher the risk. In a study of patients who had recovered from a depressive episode, 66% of those who learned meditation remained stable (no relapse) over a year, compared with 34% of the control group.<sup>53</sup>

*University of Toronto*

\* A group of 90 cancer patients learned meditation. Compared to the non-meditating control group, those who had meditated for seven weeks reported a 65% reduction in moods (less depressed, anxious, angry and confused) and a 31% reduction in symptoms of stress.<sup>54</sup>

*Psychosomatic Medicine*

\* High blood lactate concentrations have been associated with anxiety and high blood pressure. Nine studies have reported significant declines of up to 33% in blood lactate during meditation, and a rate of decline nearly four times faster than the rate of decrease among people resting or in a premeditation period.<sup>55</sup>

*The Physical and Psychological Effects of Meditation*

## **Immune system and healing**

\* One of the treatments for psoriasis is ultraviolet light therapy, which patients report as being stressful. When patients listened to meditation tapes during the ultraviolet light therapy, they healed approximately 4 times faster than the control group.<sup>56</sup>

*Psychosomatic Medicine*

\* Medical students under stress during exam periods were taught meditation. The more they practiced, the higher the percentage of T-helper cells circulating in their blood (cells that arouse the immune response to fight off infection).<sup>57</sup>

*Journal of Behavioral Medicine*

\* College students under stress at exam time showed decreases in salivary Immunoglobulin A (sIgA), a chemical that serves as the body's first line of defense against infection. Relaxation and meditation consistently lead to highly significant increases in sIgA concentrations.<sup>58</sup>

*Journal of Psychosomatic Research*

### **Women's health**

\* Women with severe PMS showed a 58% improvement in their symptoms after five months of daily meditation. Other studies showed overall improvements of 20-30% in symptoms in women with mild to severe PMS.<sup>59</sup>

*Obstetrics and Gynecology*

\* Women struggling with infertility had less anxiety, depression, and fatigue following a 10-week meditation program, along with exercise and nutritional changes. 34% became pregnant within six months.<sup>59,60</sup>

*Fertility and Sterility*

\* Fifty-five mothers of infants in a neonatal intensive care unit were trained in relaxation and visualization. They produced twice as much milk as those receiving only routine care.<sup>61</sup>

*Pediatrics*

### **Aging**

Meditation may enhance longevity and well-being. Relaxation techniques, creative word games, or meditation were taught to about 60 residents of nursing homes. In follow-up sessions, the meditators scored highest in improved learning ability, cheerfulness, and mental health, and lowest in blood pressure. Three years later, about one-third of the study group had died. All of the meditators, however, were still alive.<sup>62</sup>

*Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*

\* Those who had been practicing meditation for more than five years were physiologically 12 years younger than their chronological age, as measured by reduction of blood pressure, and better near-point vision and auditory discrimination. Short-term meditators were physiologically 5 years younger than their chronological age. The study controlled for the effects of diet and exercise.<sup>63</sup>

*International Journal of Neuroscience*

\* Brain scans of 20 people who meditated regularly showed increased thickness in regions of the cortex associated with higher functions like memory and decision making. Also, one area of the cortex seemed to have aged less quickly than in the non-meditators.<sup>64</sup>

*Massachusetts General Hospital*

\* Meditation lowers blood cortisol levels. Older women who regularly practice meditation have a reduced cortisol response to stress. The longer a woman has been practicing, the less likely she is to react to stress with high levels of blood cortisol.<sup>65</sup>

*New York Academy of Sciences*

### **General health**

\* Meditation decreases oxygen consumption, heart rate, respiratory rate, and blood pressure, and increases the intensity of alpha, theta, and delta brain waves — the opposite of the physiological changes that occur during the stress response.<sup>66</sup>

*Harvard Medical School*

\* Thirty-five highly stressed individuals were trained to meditate. Over three months, they experienced a 46% decrease in medical symptoms, compared with a slight increase in the control group.<sup>67</sup>

*American Journal of Health Promotion*

\* Oxygen consumption is reduced during meditation, in some studies by as much as 55%. Carbon dioxide elimination is reduced by as much as 50%. Respiration rate is lessened, in some cases to one breath per minute, when twelve to fourteen breaths per minute are normal.<sup>68</sup>

*The Physical and Psychological Effects of Meditation*

### **Productivity**

\* Twenty-five workers at Promega, a high tech company in Wisconsin, exhibited reported feeling 'stressed-out' and unhappy with their jobs. Scan confirmed high levels of right-brain activity. After eight weeks of meditation training and practice, the activity in the left side of their brains increased significantly. The workers reported feeling happier, with a renewed sense of enthusiasm for their life and work. The control group showed no change. At the end of the 8 weeks, everyone received flu shots to test immune responses. The meditators had more antibodies against the flu virus than the non-meditators. Those with the strongest immune response had the highest levels of left-sided brain activity.<sup>69</sup>

*University of Wisconsin*

Note: Brain scans show that meditation shifts activity in the prefrontal cortex (behind the forehead) from the right hemisphere to the left. People who have a negative disposition tend to be right-prefrontal oriented; left-prefrontals have more enthusiasms, more interests, relax more, and tend to be happier.<sup>70</sup>

\* Stress reduction has a significant impact on medical errors. Twenty-two hospitals that implemented a stress prevention program experienced a 50% drop in medical errors and a 70% reduction in malpractice claims. A control group of twenty-two hospitals which implemented no special stress reduction program showed no change in medical errors or malpractice claims.<sup>71</sup>  
[Also noted in “Stress in the Workplace”]

*Journal of Applied Psychology*

\* Meditation increases concentration. Seventy-six Tibetan monks, all experienced meditators, were shown a different image in each eye. Normally, people's brains switch between the two images every 2.5 seconds. But the monks averaged about four seconds per eye, One monk was able to focus on one of the images for 723 seconds.<sup>72</sup>

*Society for Neuroscience*

\* Meditation practices can lead to heightened cortical arousability plus decreased limbic arousability, so that perception is heightened and emotion is simultaneously reduced.<sup>73</sup>

*The Physical and Psychological Effects of Meditation*

\* Researchers tested novice meditators on a button-pressing task requiring speed and concentration. Performance was greater at 40 minutes of meditation than after a 40-minute nap.<sup>74</sup>

\* Managers and employees who regularly practiced meditation improved significantly in overall physical health, mental well-being, and vitality when compared to control subjects with similar jobs. Meditators reported significant reductions in health problems such as headaches and backaches, improved quality of sleep, and a significant reduction in the use of hard liquor and cigarettes, compared to the control groups.<sup>75</sup>

*Anxiety, Stress and Coping International Journal*

\* A study found significant improvements in relations with supervisors and co-workers after an average of eleven months practicing meditation, in comparison to the control group. Job performance and job satisfaction increased while desire to change jobs decreased.<sup>76</sup>

*Academy of Management Journal*

## **Addiction**

Meditation produced a larger reduction in tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drug use than either standard substance abuse treatments (including counseling, pharmacological treatments, relaxation training, and Twelve-Step programs) or prevention programs (such as programs to counteract peer-pressure and promote personal development). Whereas the effects of conventional programs typically decrease sharply by three months, effects of meditation on total abstinence from tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drug ranged from 50% to 89% over a 18 to 22 month period of study.<sup>77</sup>

*Alcoholism Treatment Quarterly*

\* Meditative self-awareness can reduce binge overeating. In a study of obese women, meditation training and awareness practice while eating (slowly savoring the flavor of a piece of cheese, being aware of how much is enough), reduced eating binges from an average of 4 per week to 1.5 per week.<sup>78</sup>

*Journal of Health Psychology*

\* 90% of those who practiced meditation twice each day had quit or decreased smoking by the end of the study, verses 71% for the once each day meditators, 55% for those who were irregular or no longer practiced meditation, and 33% for the non-meditating group.<sup>79</sup>

*Dissertation Abstracts International*

\* After three months of meditation, 50 to 75% of regular marijuana users decreased or stopped using marijuana, compared to 15% of the nonmeditating control group. The longer people practiced meditation, the more likely they were to decrease or stop the use of marijuana.<sup>80</sup>

*American Journal of Psychiatry*

## **Children's health**

\* Forty-eight children who participated in a 6-week meditation program showed significant improvements in behavior, self-esteem, and relationship quality. There was an average 35% improvement in ADHD symptoms. Of the 31 children taking medication for their ADHD. 11 were able to reduce their medications during the course of the program.<sup>81</sup>

*Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*

\* Middle school students who were exposed to relaxation and meditation techniques over a three year period scored higher on work habits, cooperation, attendance and had significantly higher GPA's than non-meditating students.<sup>82</sup>

Journal of Research and Development in Education

From "Freedom from Stress" by David Gamow  
www.clarityseminars.com

© 2006, Glenbridge Publishing

Reprint requests: [karen@clarityseminars.com](mailto:karen@clarityseminars.com)

§§§

## **Jefferson hospital study**

Meditation training helps patients with chronic illnesses ranging from AIDS to sleeping disorders reduce their symptoms and improve their quality of life, according to a new study.

Daily functioning as well as both psychological and physical symptoms improved in patients participating in a meditation training program.

Patients also reported dramatically improved ability to cope with stress, improved sense of well being, reduced body tension and increased mental clarity, says lead author Diane K. Reibel, Ph.D., of the Center for Integrative Medicine at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia.

The meditation program is known as mindfulness-based stress reduction or MBSR, an intervention designed for patients with chronic illness. The program consisted of eight weekly group sessions plus a full-day intensive meditation retreat in the sixth week of the program.

"Mindfulness meditation helps in facing all aspects of life, however painful, with increasing degrees of equanimity, wisdom and compassion," says Reibel.

The study is published in the July/August issue of *General Hospital Psychiatry*. One-hundred and four patients completed the meditation-training program, representing 90 percent of the original patients recruited.

The most common chronic illnesses were anxiety/panic disorder, asthma/allergies, cancer, depression, gastrointestinal problems, hypertension, chronic pain, sleep disorders and stress.

"MBSR programs contain several potentially therapeutic elements that may account for observed improvements in physical and mental health among participants. These include mindfulness meditation training as well as other therapeutic factors inherent in group intervention, such as emotional expression and social support," says Reibel.

Of patients who responded to a one-year follow-up questionnaire, 91 percent had formally or informally kept up with their meditation. These patients also maintained similar psychological and physical benefits at one year as measured directly after completion of the training program.

However, the researchers warn that since only 30 percent of the original program patients responded to the one-year assessment, the results may have been skewed toward the patients who had sustained benefits from the intervention.

They note that the study is also limited by the lack of a control group but point to previous research that support the hypothesis that meditation can produce profound effects on the mind and body.

"The health promotion effects of MBSR appear to complement conventional biomedical treatment in a comprehensive, patient-centered approach to healing and alleviation of human suffering," they conclude.

The study was funded by the Advanta Corporation, Goldsmith-Greenfield Foundation and Jefferson Medical College. August 31, 2001. [www.healthandyoga.com/html/meditation](http://www.healthandyoga.com/html/meditation)

### **Meditation: an enrichment to your soul**

\*Improvement of body luster and general health: When your mind focuses on a particular part of the body, the blood flow to that part increases and cells receive more oxygen and other nutrients in abundance. Today, many of the film stars and fashion models include meditation in their daily regimen.

### **Improvement in concentration**

Many of the athletes and sports professionals regularly employ meditation methods. Studies have found a direct correlation between concentration exercises (meditation) and the performance level of sports professionals.

Meditation strengthens the mind, it comes under control and is able to provide effective guidance to the physical body to effectively execute all its projects. Psychological exercises are a powerful way of improving concentration and improving mental strength.

### **Health benefits of Meditation**

Though meditation is usually recognized as a largely spiritual practice, it also has many health benefits. The yoga and meditation techniques are being implemented in management of life threatening diseases; in transformation of molecular and genetic structure; in reversal of mental illnesses, in accelerated learning programs, in perceptions and communications beyond the physical, in solving problems and atomic and nuclear physics; in gaining better ecological understanding, in management of lifestyle and future world problems. Some benefits of meditation are:

- It lowers oxygen consumption.
- It decreases respiratory rate.
- It increases blood flow and slows the heart rate.
- Increases exercise tolerance in heart patients.
- Leads to a deeper level of relaxation.
- Good for people with high blood pressure as it brings the B.P. to normal.
- Reduces anxiety attacks by lowering the levels of blood lactate.

- Decreases muscle tension (any pain due to tension) and headaches
- Builds self-confidence.
- It increases serotonin production which influences mood and behaviour. Low levels of serotonin are associated with depression, obesity, insomnia and headaches.
- Helps in chronic diseases like allergies , arthritis etc.
- Reduces Pre- menstrual Syndrome.
- Helps in post-operative healing.
- Enhances the immune system. Research has revealed that meditation increases activity of 'natural-killer cells', which kill bacteria and cancer cells.
- Also reduces activity of viruses and emotional distress.
- Resolve phobias - Meditation can help to resolve the deepest of neuroses, fears and conflict which play their part in causing stress and ill health.
- Meditation has been proved scientifically to combat stress and stress related disorders like high blood pressure, insomnia and heart diseases:

### **Why are we stressed most of the times ?**

Normally, any life threatening situation triggers off the STRESS RESPONSE. This response enables a person to act quickly and survive intense, short- term challenges, which require less brains and fast reflexes. This is possibly the survival response inherited from our pre-civilization days. But today the same response is triggered in traffic jams, work related irritations, family squabbles and many such situations- meaning that with any petty problem, our body ends up preparing for a life-death situation. And then as these situations don't come to an end, with a single confrontation, we remain in a perpetual state of stress.

### **What happens to our body during stress ?**

During stress, the heart beats faster and blood pressure rises. The blood flow is diverted from the internal organs to the muscles as well as the areas of the brain that control muscle coordination. As a result, the brain releases chemicals that help the body cope better with injuries, including those that block pain and help the blood clot faster. All these symptoms lead to the feeling of being run down, tired and basically stressed.

### **How meditation reduces stress ?**

Meditation comes to the rescue in such a situation and induces 'RELAXATION RESPONSE' . Dr Benson (used to work at Harvard Medical School, did a research of physiological effects of meditation) found that there was a counter-balancing mechanism to the fight-or-flight response in most stress-inducing situations. As stress is induced by stimulation of the- hypothalamus of the brain Relaxation can achieved by countering this stimulation - by stimulating other areas of the brain. This is achieved by doing meditation, which leads to state of deep rest.

## FOR CANCER PATIENT

The effects of a mindfulness meditation-based stress reduction program on mood and symptoms of stress in cancer outpatients

The goals of this work were to assess the effects of participation in a mindfulness meditation-based stress reduction program on mood disturbance and symptoms of stress in cancer outpatients immediately after and 6 months after program completion. A convenience sample of eligible cancer patients were enrolled after they had given informed consent. All patients completed the Profile of Mood States (POMS) and Symptoms of Stress Inventory (SOSI) both before and after the intervention and 6 months later. The intervention consisted of a mindfulness meditation group lasting 1.5 h each week for 7 weeks, plus daily home meditation practice. A total of 89 patients, average age 51, provided pre-intervention data. Eighty patients provided post-intervention data, and 54 completed the 6-month follow-up. The participants were heterogeneous with respect to type and stage of cancer.

Patients' scores decreased significantly from before to after the intervention on the POMS and SOSI total scores and most subscales, indicating less mood disturbance and fewer symptoms of stress, and these improvements were maintained at the 6-month follow-up. More advanced stages of cancer were associated with less initial mood disturbance, while more home practice and higher initial POMS scores predicted improvements on the POMS between the pre- and post-intervention scores. Female gender and more education were associated with higher initial SOSI scores, and improvements on the SOSI were predicted by more education and greater initial mood disturbance. This program was effective in decreasing mood disturbance and stress symptoms for up to 6 months in both male and female patients with a wide variety of cancer diagnoses, stages of illness, and educational background, and with disparate ages.

*Six-month follow-up. Carlson LE, Ursuliak Z, Goodey E, Angen M, Speca M.*

*Department of Psychosocial Resources, Tom Baker Cancer Center, Alberta Cancer Board, 1331 29 St. N.W., Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2N 4N2. [lindacar@cancerboard.ab.ca](mailto:lindacar@cancerboard.ab.ca)*

*(Support Care Cancer. 2001 Mar;9(2):112-23.)*

§§§

## **Dr. Herbert Benson, Harvard Medical School**

### **HOW MEDITATION AFFECTS CERTAIN CONDITIONS**

“During meditation the brain’s alpha waves change to theta waves, shifting from a state of arousal to one of deep relaxation. This triggers a positive parasympathetic response and results in lowering stress, anxiety, tension, heart rate, blood pressure and oxygen .”

--Nigam, *40 Minutes with God: A Scientific Approach to Healing Through Faith and Prayer*.

“Meditation decreases oxygen consumption by 17 per cent and reduces heart beat by three per minute.”

--Herbert Benson, *Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School*.

**Herbert Benson, M.D.** (born 1935), is an American cardiologist and founder of the Mind/Body Medical Institute at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. He graduated from Wesleyan University and Harvard Medical School.

Benson is Mind/Body Medical Institute Associate Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School and director *emeritus* of the Benson-Henry Institute (BHI). He is the author or co-author of more than 175 scientific publications and 11 books. More than four million copies of his books have been printed in many languages.

Benson is a pioneer in mind/body medicine, one of the first Western physicians to bring spirituality and healing into medicine. In his 35+ year career, he has defined the relaxation response and continues to lead teaching and research into its efficacy in counteracting the harmful effects of stress. The recipient of numerous national and international awards, Dr. Benson lectures widely about mind/body medicine and the BHI's work. His expertise is frequently sought by national and international news media, and he appears in scores of newspapers, magazines, and television programs each year. Dr. Benson's research extends from the laboratory to the clinic to Asian field expeditions. His work serves as a bridge between medicine and religion, East and West, mind and body, and belief and science.

Benson participated in a dialogue that was held at Harvard in March 1991, as part of a conversation between scientists and Buddhists initiated by 14th Dalaï Lama, organized by the Mind and Life Institute. Book Review: MindScience.

### **Mind Body Medicine**

Dr. Benson has pioneered mind-body research, focusing on stress and the relaxation response in medicine. In his research, the mind and body are one system, in which meditation can play a significant role in reducing stress responses. He continues to pioneer medical research into Bodymind questions.

#### **Publications**

*The Relaxation Response*, 1975. ISBN 978-0688029555

*The Mind/Body Effect: How behavioral medicine can show you the way to better health* , 1979. ISBN 978-0671241438

*Beyond the Relaxation Response*, 1984

*Your Maximum Mind*, 1987

'Contributor - 'MindScience: An East-West Dialogue *Daniel Goleman and Robert A. F. Thurman* Editors, *Wisdom Publications*, 1991. ISBN 978-0861710669

*The Wellness Book*, 1992

*Timeless Healing: The Power and Biology of Belief*, 1996. ISBN 978-0788157752

*The Relaxation Response* - Updated and Expanded (25th Anniversary Edition), 2000

*The Breakout Principle*, 2003

*Mind Over Menopause*, 2004

*Mind Your Heart*, 2004. ISBN 978-0743237024

*The Harvard Medical School Guide to Lowering Your Blood Pressure*, 2006. ISBN 978-0071448017

### **References**

Benson, Herbert. 1976. Steps to Elicit the Relaxation Response. RelaxationResponse.org. From The Relaxation Response. HarperTorch.

Herbert Benson et al., "Body temperature changes during the practice of g Tum-mo yoga" in *Nature* 295 (21. Januar 1982), <http://lib.semi.ac.cn:8080/tsh/dzzy/wsqq/Nature/295-234.pdf>

Benson, Herbert. 1998. Staying Healthy in a Stressful World. PBS Body & Soul with Gail Harris. PBS Online: Beacon Productions.

Carey, Benedict. 2006. Long-Awaited Medical Study Questions the Power of Prayer. Mar 31. *New York Times*

Kiesling, Stephen, and T. George Harris. 1989. The prayer war - Herbert Benson's research on health benefits of prayer. Oct. *Psychology Today*

### **External links**

The Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine

Steps to Elicit the Relaxation Response

The Relaxation response at Google Books

Spirituality emerges as point of debate in mind-body movement

Inner Calm: Benson explains relaxation techniques on Humankind public radio

The Herbert Benson Papers can be found at The Center for the History of Medicine at the Countway Library, Harvard Medical School.

These findings have prompted doctors to prescribe meditation with medicine

§§§

## **Dealing With Change and Stress, Jyotish Novak**

*The following article is excerpted from Jyotish Novak's new Meditation Therapy™ for Stress and Change video. Jyotish is the spiritual director of Ananda Sangha, and is the author of the best-selling book, How to Meditate.*

Through the years, I've had a lot opportunity to work with people under stress and I've seen how important meditation is for staying balanced. If you have stress in your life, meditation can be an immense help to you.

In this Meditation Therapy tape I'll share principles and techniques that can help you bring balance and peace back into your life. Stress training is common today; everyone from fortune 500 companies to the military recognizes how important it is to give people tools to deal with this potential killer. But, most stress training simply helps people relax. As important as this is, it is not enough because it works only with the conscious or subconscious mind. Meditation, however, enlists the superconsciousness, the infinite awareness at the core of our being. It is from this deep level that lasting changes come.

There are four sections to this tape. First, I'll help you better understand how to work with change and stress. The second section is a visualization. In the third section we'll meditate. This is the most important part of this tape. When the mind is still, you get in touch with deeper levels of consciousness and gain new perspectives on your life. It is from these profound inner insights that real improvements come. After you've learned the basics of meditation, you will probably want to extend the time you sit in inner silence.

Unhealthy levels of stress usually come from trying to control the uncontrollable. The "fight or flight" response biologically programs us to respond to challenge with some level of stress. But, not all stress is unhealthy, and in fact, some degree of pressure is vital to our well-being. Without it we become bored and look for stimulation. We watch TV and movies, or play games, sports and engage in activities that have no purpose other to excite the mind. Recent studies show that stimulation for the brain is almost as important to our well-being as food and water. Entertainment moguls know that excitement can be like a drug and use it to hook us on their programs. The next time you watch a TV show or a movie, look for their deliberate attempts to shock you - loud music, sudden scene changes, and odd lighting effects. The nervous system gradually adapts to this kind of stimulation and begins to close down. Soon we feel the need to find more excitement.

In real life, however, we don't have the same level of detachment as we do while being entertained. At work, or with our health, or finances, excessive change is threatening, and we experience stress. Chronic stress can cause serious health problems such as high blood pressure, elevated heart rate, and a weakening of the immune system. It even causes physical problems such as back pain.

Since the effects of stress begin in the mind, the same event will affect different people in completely unique ways, depending on how they REACT. But, you have a choice in how you respond to situations and herein lies your power. It has been well said that, "pain is inevitable, suffering is optional." Most stress and pain comes from wishing that things were other than they are. Learn to flow with life and much of your stress will disappear.

Here is a challenge for you. Tonight, before you go to sleep, mentally review your day and try to see how often you wanted things to be different. Did you wish that you could have slept longer? That you didn't have to do certain chores, that other drivers didn't behave the way they did, that people at work were nicer? It goes on and on. The more you try to control the unchangeable, the more stress you create for yourself. What is the way out?

We must learn to be more accepting of life. Life is a school and we draw to ourselves the events, circumstances, and relationships we need to help us grow. Every problem gives us with two choices - to expand or contract our consciousness. Do we become defensive and self-protective? Or do we see challenges as opportunities to become stronger, to learn and expand. If we contract our hearts, we experience pain, not because conditions have made us unhappy, but because pain is the inevitable result of excessive self-focus. Have no doubt about it, a contractive attitude will produce stress. On the other hand, when we relax and release unnecessary attachments we automatically experience happiness and fulfillment. Eventually, through meditation, we can discover an underlying joy that doesn't change under any circumstance. And expansion of consciousness is the essence of spiritual growth.

To deal with stress successfully, we must learn relaxation and non-attachment. Physical relaxation helps release muscular tension. With this in mind, I'll be teaching you deep relaxation in a few minutes. Physical tension, through mind-body feedback, also adds to our mental tension, and the most dangerous tension is in the mind. To relax the mind we need to develop attitudes of acceptance and contentment.

Learn to accept that whatever comes to you is for your ultimate good. The truth is that we attract situations to help us learn needed lessons. Think, for a moment, about people and circumstances in your life that you are trying to push away. Mentally say, "I accept you exactly as you are." Better yet, try to say, "I am grateful for you and for everything in my life." This will create the mental space necessary to learn what life is trying to teach you. Once we have learned our lessons, we find that conditions change automatically. Acceptance is about learning to live with faith, not fear. It is understanding that we will attract to ourselves exactly what we need. The law of karma states that, good or bad, you will get exactly what is coming to you. Don't dwell on past events and or future plans. If you stay in the here and now you will realize that you can be happy just as you are. One of the greatest sources of fulfillment is to accept yourself, with all your strengths and weakness. Then, don't dwell on yourself, but think more of others and their needs.

I was once on a drive in the mountains with my teacher, Swami Kriyananda. During a blizzard our car went out of control and smashed into the side of a bus. Kriyananda calmly got out, walked around to the front of the bus and realized that it was headed to our destination. After arranging for our car to be towed, we climbed on to the bus. The passengers were sympathizing with us over our loss. Kriyananda said, "You know, in a week I would have gotten over any sense of loss and be perfectly happy. Why wait a week? I'm happy now!"

Acceptance might seem like a somewhat passive state. A little like, "Well, even if this is awful, there's nothing I can do about it I might as well accept it." But, we can develop a higher more active state of acceptance. The great yogi Paramhansa Yogananda said we should train our minds to be even-minded and cheerful in all situations." This is not merely a nice maxim, but a powerful, life-changing technique. How do we achieve this state of mind? Commit yourself to being happy under all circumstances. Then watch your reactions to events. As soon as you catch yourself being pulled down, reaffirm your decision to be happy. You may not be able to change the event, but you can change your state of mind.

### **The Sounds of Silence: Anti-noise machines**

Imagine living next door to Luciano Pavarotti. You love the big guy, but his full-throated practice sessions are rattling the china. To silence the booming tenor, you could do one of three things: ask him to practice his Puccini outside, wear earplugs around your apartment or put a rock band on your CD player, crank up the volume and drown out Pavarotti's voice. The last option wouldn't be smart, obviously, since you'd only be creating more noise. But what if the sounds coming from your CD were the acoustic mirror image of the sound waves coming out of Pavarotti's mouth? Instead of doubling the amount of noise, they would actually cancel it out, zap it from the air. What you'd be left with is peace and quiet.

The idea of stifling Pavarotti or any human voice by scientific means is a fanciful, of course. But the theory behind it— something acoustics scientists call anti-noise—is not. In fact, some of the biggest electronics companies plan take the concept seriously and, together with a few small U.S. firms, are making "active noise control" (ANC) devices to help quiet the daily din. These are small but sophisticated sound systems that analyze noise digitally and then—almost instantaneously—generate equal but inverse sound waves, or anti-noise.

A typical ANC device can weaken a targeted noise by 10 to 15 decibels. For most industrial noises, that means reducing the sound level by 50 to 70 percent. Nissan has already installed a noise-control system in the interior of a luxury sedan called the Bluebird, which is sold only in Japan. The company claims the unit softens the car's four-cylinder roar by 10 decibels. Toshiba's huge (400 liter) Glacio refrigerator has got an ANC system to smother the hum of the compressor. In the United States, the CSX Transportation Inc. has installed a noise-control device on 20 vacuum pumps used to unload dry-bulk materials from railroad cars. "This is an infant industry, but it has huge growth potential," asserts Michael Parrella, president of Noise Cancellation Technologies.

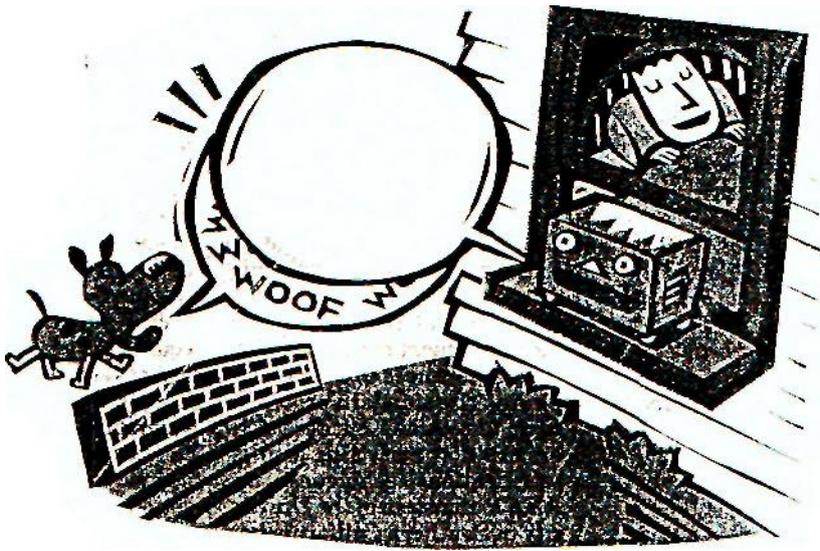
The first line of defense against noise is to absorb it with passive materials like glass or wool. Passive sound reduction—soundproofing—is effective at high-frequency levels, but less so at low frequencies. That's where active noise control can help. Anti-noise is good at interfering with low-frequency sounds, especially those generated by machines (like industrial fans and power transformers) that follow a fairly constant noise cycle. A typical ANC system consists of several components: a microphone that picks up the original sound, an electronic controller that breaks down the sound into phases and conceives the anti-noise, an amplifier that supplies the power, to broadcast the anti-noise, and another set of microphones, which determine how well the unit is performing.

Digital signal processors are the heart of an anti-noise system. They make millions of calculations a second, analyzing the original noise and then creating a new sound that is exactly the same amplitude as the original but, in acoustic terms, 180 degrees out of phase. That means that the peaks of the anti-noise sound waves correspond to the wave valleys of the undesired sound, and vice versa. When the inverse waves collide, they weaken each other. Because electricity travels faster than sound, the computer can produce anti-noise before the original sound reaches the human ear. But there is little room for error. "Your algorithms have to be very, very accurate," says Stephen Dickmann, president of Digisonix, a Middleton, Wisconsin, company that makes noise-control devices for industry. "If you send out a canceling wave that isn't precisely opposite to the original wave, it won't work."

The ANC industry was expected to blossom in the 1980s, but it didn't. The systems were too big, expensive and unreliable. Now, say proponents of the technology, cheap but powerful digital signal processors make it possible to sell commercial ANC units for about \$3,000. "Four years ago we needed a rather large computer to do what we can now do with a thumbnail-size chip," says Parrella of Noise Cancellation Technologies. His company's ANC unit is being bundled with magnetic-resonance imaging (MRI) systems made by Siemens Medical Systems of Germany. The system is said to eliminate as much as 90 percent of the noise generated by the MRI, allowing patients to listen to music and hear instructions from the machine's operator.

NCT has signed marketing and development accords with several manufacturers, including Philips Consumer Electronics and Boet S.A., a French muffler company. Electrolux AI3 of Sweden has licensed NCT's noise-control technology for household appliances.

Next up may be electronic mufflers containing noise-control units for cars, trucks and buses. Most conventional mufflers contain a series of baffles and chambers to deflect engine exhaust noise back to its source. But doing that restricts the flow of the exhaust, robbing the engine of power. Electronic automotive mufflers could conceivably eliminate a lot of the exhaust back flow—improving fuel economy or engine performance or both. Such mufflers are being tested and might be available within a few years for an extra \$200. Beyond that, a noise-control device might be placed directly on a car's engine mount. Imagine starting your lawn mower and hearing. . . nothing. Or a washing machine that works silently. "It's a little scary, isn't it?" says Parrella. "People are psychologically prepared for noise." But unless they're listening to Pavarotti or someone else in concert, they prefer the sounds of silence. And for that, the nascent noise-control industry hopes consumers will pay a little extra.



--Illustration By Robert Zimmerman

--Article in the magazine "Newsweek," August 10, 199?

§§§

## Stress: Can we Cope?

As modern pressures take their toll, doctors preach relaxation.

"Rule No. 1 is, don't sweat the small stuff. Rule No. 2 is, it's all small stuff. And if you can't fight and you can't flee, flow." —University of Nebraska Cardiologist, Robert Eliot

It is the dawn of human history, and Homo sapiens steps out from his cave to watch the rising sun paint the horizon. Suddenly he hears a rustling in the forest. His muscles tense, his heart pounds, his breath comes rapidly as he locks eyes with a saber-toothed tiger. Should he fight or run for his life? He reaches down, picks up a sharp rock and hurls it. The animal snarls but disappears into the trees. The man feels his body go limp, his breathing ease. He returns to his darkened den to rest.

It is the start of another working day, and Homo sapiens steps out of his apartment building into the roar of rush hour. He picks his way through the traffic and arrives at the corner just in time to watch his bus pull away. Late for work, he opens his office door and finds the boss pacing inside. His report was due an hour ago, he is told; the client is furious. If he values his job, he had better have a good explanation. And, by the way, he can forget about taking a vacation this summer. The man eyes a paperweight on his desk and longs to throw it at his oppressor. Instead, he sits down, his stomach churning, his back muscles knotting, his blood pressure climbing. He reaches for a Maalox and an aspirin and has a sudden yearning for a dry martini, straight up.

The saber-toothed tiger is long gone, but the modern jungle is no less perilous. The sense of panic over a deadline, a light plane connection, a reckless driver on one's tail are the new beasts that can set the heart racing, the teeth on edge, the sweat streaming. These responses may have served our ancestors well; that extra burst of adrenaline got their muscles primed, their attention focused and their nerves ready for a sudden "fight or flight." But try doing either one in today's traffic jams or boardrooms. "The fight-or-flight emergency response is inappropriate to today's social stresses," says Harvard Cardiologist Herbert Benson, an expert on the subject. It is also dangerous. Says Psychiatrist Peter Knapp of Boston University: "When you get a Wall Street broker using the responses a cave man used to fight (he elements, you've got a problem."

Indeed we have. In the past 30 years, doctors and health officials have come to realize how heavy a toll stress is taking on the nation's well-being. According to the American Academy of Family Physicians, two-thirds of office visits to family doctors are prompted by stress-related symptoms. At the same time, leaders of industry have become alarmed by the huge cost of such symptoms in absenteeism, company medical expenses and lost productivity. Based on national samples, these costs have been estimated at \$50 billion to \$75 billion a year, more than \$750 for every U.S. worker.

Stress is now known to be a major contributor, either directly or indirectly, to coronary heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, accidental injuries, cirrhosis of the liver and suicide—six of the leading causes of death in the U.S. Stress also plays a role in aggravating such diverse conditions as multiple sclerosis, diabetes, genital herpes and even trench mouth. It is a sorry sign of the times that the three best-selling drugs in the country are an ulcer medication (Tagamet), a hypertension drug (Inderal) and a tranquilizer (Valium). Concludes Dr. Joel Fikes, director of the behavioral medicine program at the University of Louisville: "Our mode of life itself, the way we live, is emerging as today's principal cause of illness."

Concern over the "stress epidemic" has prompted what may be called a mass fight-and-flight reaction. New fields have sprung into being: behavioral medicine, to battle stress-related illness; psycho-neuro-immunology, to explore the way emotional states affect the body's defenses. Major corporations have established elaborate stress-management programs to help harried executives cope. And around the country, but especially in mellow-minded California, says Psychiatrist Mardi Horowitz of the University of California at San Francisco, "everyone is massaging, jogging and hot-tubbing to reduce this cumulative stress."

No one really knows if there is more stress now than in the past, but many experts believe it has become more pervasive. "We live in a world of uncertainties," says Harvard's Benson, "everything from the nuclear threat to job insecurity to the near assassination of the President to the lacing of medicines with poisons." Through television, these problems loom up under our very noses, and yet, says Psychologist Kenneth Dychtwald of Berkeley, Calif., the proximity only frustrates us: "We can't tight back with those people on TV."

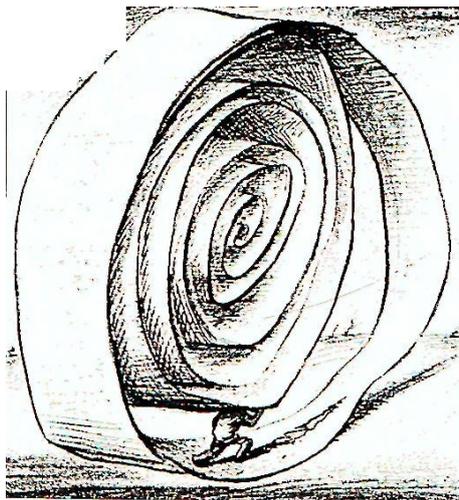
The upheaval in society's most basic values adds greatly to the general level of anxiety. Even our pleasures are often fretful. When Psychiatrist George Serban of New York University conducted a nationwide poll of 1,008 mostly married men and women aged 18 to 60, he found that their greatest source of stress was the changes in society's attitudes toward sex, including sexual permissiveness, and "the new social roles of the sexes." While stress might have once taken the form of an occasional calamity, it is now "a chronic, relentless psychosocial situation," says Dr. Paul Rosch, director of the American Institute of Stress in Yonkers, N.Y.

Curiously, Rosch notes, today's pressures have created a breed of thrill seekers who, often to their own detriment, prefer excitement over tranquility. Life in the fast lane becomes a dangerous habit for them. "Skydivers get hooked on the jump," he says. "Executives purposely arrive at the airport at the last possible minute. People today have become addicted to their own adrenaline secretion."

For all its present vogue, "stress" has only recently been admitted into the medical vocabulary. For years, doctors considered the term too unscientific to be taken seriously. "The moment you used the word, you were dismissed as a thinking individual," says Dr. Harold Ward, director of the stress medicine laboratory at the University of California at San Diego. One reason was the lack of an adequate definition for the concept. According to the late Dr. Hans Selye, the Austrian-born founding father of stress research, stress is simply "the rate of wear and tear in the body." But others persist in using the term to refer to any external stimulus that causes wear and tear, or to the resulting internal damage. This has led to considerable confusion. As one researcher has put it, "Stress, in addition to being itself, and the result of itself, is also the cause of itself."

Medical interest in the phenomenon began on the battlefield, where the devastating effects of chronic stress are unmistakable. During the Civil War, for example, palpitations were so commonplace that they became known as "soldier's heart." During World War I, the crippling anxiety called shell shock was at first attributed to the vibrations from heavy artillery, which was believed to damage blood vessels in the brain.

This theory was abandoned by the time World War II came along, and the problem was renamed battle fatigue. By then the great Harvard physiologist Walter Cannon, along with Selye, had proved that psychological strain itself could cause dramatic hormonal changes and hence physiological symptoms. Selye showed that when the fight-or-flight response becomes chronic, as it does in battle, long-term chemical changes occur, leading to high blood pressure, an increased rate of arteriosclerosis, depression of the immune system and a cascade of other problems. "Humans have a fairly robust capacity to withstand a massive dose of acute stress," says Dr. Fred Goodwin, director of intramural research at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). "Where we fall down is in our ability to mobilize for recurrent stressful episodes."



Today the physiology of stress is being worked out in extraordinary detail. Says Neurochemist Jack Barchas of Stanford: "We have learned that even subtle behavior can markedly influence biochemistry."

War makes everyone anxious. But because most other kinds of stress are subjective, researchers have found it difficult to say just why a given situation is threatening. "I would die if I had to sit in a space capsule," says Boston University Psychiatrist Sanford Cohen. But while working with the early astronauts some 20 years ago, Cohen observed that "John Glenn just saw it as a job and went about it in a businesslike manner." Notes Benson: "A snowstorm is not stressful to a skier, but it is to someone who has an appointment across town."

In the early 1950s, University of Washington Psychiatrist Thomas Holmes determined that the single common denominator for stress, even for an astronaut, is "the necessity of significant change in the life pattern of the individual." Holmes found that among tuberculosis patients, for example, the onset of the disease had generally followed a cluster of disruptive events: a death in the family, a new job, marriage. Stress did not cause the illness, Holmes emphasizes— "It takes a germ"—but tension did seem to promote the disease process.

Holmes discovered that merely discussing upsetting events could produce physiological changes. An experiment in which sample biopsies were taken before and after discussions of certain subjects showed that "we caused tissue damage just by talking about a mother-in-law's coming to visit," says Holmes. The example, he notes, is not facetious: "A person often catches a cold when a mother-in-law comes to visit. Patients mentioned mothers-in-law so often that we came to consider them a common cause of disease in the U.S."

In an attempt to measure the impact of "life change events," Holmes and Psychologist Richard Rahe, working together in the 1940s and '50s, asked 5,000 people to rate the amount of social readjustment required for various events. The result is the widely used Holmes-Rahe scale. At the top is death of a spouse (100 stress points), followed by divorce (73), marital separation (65), imprisonment (63) and death of a close family member (63). Not all stressful events are unpleasant. Marriage rates 50; pregnancy, 40; buying a house, 31; and Christmas, 12. Holmes went on to show that in a sample of 88 young doctors, those who totaled 300 or more units on the scale had a 70% chance of suffering ulcers, psychiatric disturbances, broken bones or other health problems within two years of the various crises; those who scored under 200 had only a 37% incidence of such infirmities. The scale proved to be an effective prognosticator as well: by tallying up the life stress of healthy college football players, Holmes and Rahe were even able to predict which ones would be injured during the next season.

The impact of major life events on health has been reconfirmed many times. A study published earlier this year in the British medical journal *lancet* reported that the incidence of fatal heart attacks rose sharply in Athens in the days following the 1981 earthquake there. Stanford Neurochemist Barchas has found that a high score on the Holmes-Rahe scale is linked to elevated levels of the hormones associated with stress: adrenaline (which scientists have rechristened epinephrine), norepinephrine and beta-endorphin. An Australian study of bereavement has shown that eight weeks after the death of their spouses, widows and widowers have diminished immune responses, leaving them more vulnerable to infection and cancer.

Some experts do not agree that the Holmes-Rahe scale is the best measure of personal stress. By conducting a series of surveys, Psychologist Richard Lazarus, of the University of California at Berkeley, has become convinced that the everyday annoyances of life, or "hassles," contribute more to illness and depression than major life changes. Lazarus cites a poem of Charles Bukowski to illustrate his point:

. . . It's not the large things that send a man to the madhouse  
. . . no, it's the continuing series of small tragedies that send a man to the madhouse;  
not the death of his love but a shoelace that snaps with no time left

The snapped-shoelace factor ties in with a number of recent studies. In a survey of 210 Florida police officers, Psychologists Charles Spieberger and Kenneth Grier of the University of South Florida found that far more stressful than responding to a felony in progress or making arrests while alone was the day-to-day friction of dealing with what the officers saw as an "ineffective" judicial system and "distorted" press accounts about their work. In other stress surveys, police sergeants in Houston groused about paper pushing more than physical danger; teachers ranked administrative details second only to inadequate salary; air traffic controllers, whose high rate of hypertension and ulcers has been attributed to job pressure, complained more about such mundane matters as management, shift schedules and "irrelevant" chores than the strain of guiding heavy air traffic. Such traffic, however, does take a toll on people living close to airports. Blasted daily by noise, people near Los Angeles International Airport have been found to have higher rates of hypertension, heart disease and suicide than residents of quieter areas.

The relentless stresses of poverty and ghetto life have also been associated with higher health risks. Studies of poor black neighborhoods in Detroit and Boston have correlated hypertension, which is twice as common among American blacks as among whites, with overcrowded housing and high levels of unemployment and crime. Research conducted in Massachusetts by Epidemiologist David Jenkins, now on the faculty of the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, showed that the two areas with the highest mortality rates in the state were the Boston black ghetto of Roxbury and the working-class white enclave of South Boston, which had been locked in a bitter feud over school busing. Mortality rates in these two "death zones" are elevated not only for hypertension-related ailments like stroke, but for all causes of death. Even the rate of cancer among Roxbury men was 37% above the state average.

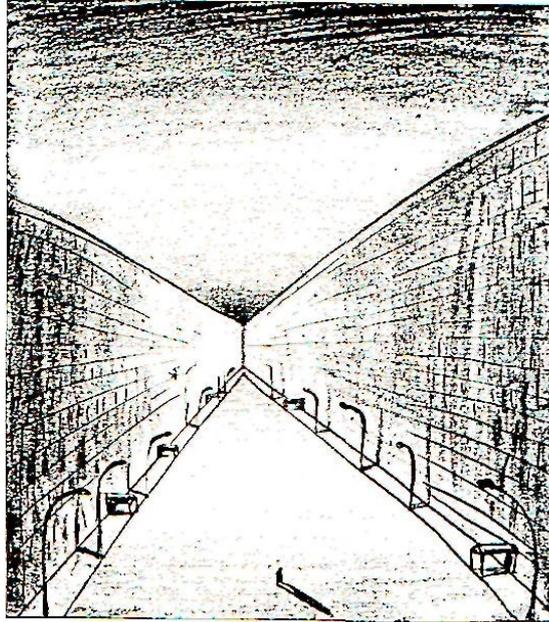
Whether or not daily stresses and hassles do more damage than life-change events may, in the final analysis, be a moot point. A single event can cause smaller changes that touch every aspect of existence. Divorce, for example, "is not an isolated event," observes U.C.S.F. Psychiatrist Leonard Pearlin. "It is accompanied by some social isolation, a reduction in income and sometimes the problems of being a single parent. These become the chronic strains of life."

Joblessness has a similar ripple effect.

\_\_\_\_\_The greatest source of stress is not the actual loss of the job but rather the gradual domestic and psychological changes it imposes. These can be devastating, says Sociologist M. Harvey Brenner, professor of health services administration at Johns Hopkins. Brenner has found that over a period of about 25 years beginning in the late 1940s, for each 1% increase in the national unemployment rate, there were 1.9% more U.S. deaths from heart disease and cirrhosis, 4.1 % more suicides, and an upturn in the number of first-time admissions to state mental health facilities (up 4.3% for men, 2.3% for women).

To be sure, not everyone falls to pieces because of the loss of a job or even a I spouse. While surveying unemployed workers in the Detroit area. University of Michigan Researcher Louis Ferman found one hard-luck victim who had been successively laid off by the Studebaker Corp. in 1962 when it was about to fold, a truck manufacturer that went under in the 1970s, and more recently during cutbacks at a Chrysler plant. By all accounts, "he should have been a basket case," says Ferman, "yet he was one of the best-adjusted fellows I've run into." Asked his secret, the man replied, "I've got a loving wife and go to church every Sunday."

Such examples have convinced stress scholars that far more important than the trials and tribulations in one's life is how one deals with them. Consequently, much research into stress and preventive medicine has focused on what psychologists call "hardiness" or coping behavior. Certain population groups are known to enjoy remarkable good health and longevity: Mormons, nuns, symphony conductors and women who are listed in *Who's Who*. This suggests that something in the way these people live, possibly even such abstractions as faith, pride of accomplishment or productivity, plays a role in diminishing the ill effects of stress. "The most significant observation," says Rosch of the American Institute of Stress, "is that widows die at rates three to 13 times as high as married women for every known major cause of death. Why? How does this work?"



Psychologists point to a number of personal factors that seem to be helpful in coping. Among them: the sense of being in control of one's life, having a network of friends or family to provide what researchers call "social support," and such personality factors as flexibility and hopefulness. At Johns Hopkins, Dr. Caroline Bedell Thomas has correlated psychological factors with the long-term health records of 1,337 medical students who graduated between 1948 and 1964. One of the strongest prognosticators of cancer, mental illness and suicide, she found, was "lack of closeness to parents" and a negative attitude toward one's family. A 1978 study of 7,000 people in Alameda County, Calif., confirmed the importance of social support. Epidemiologist Leonard Syme of Berkeley, Calif., who conducted the study, found that even after adjusting for such factors as smoking and histories of major illnesses, people with few close contacts were dying two to three times faster than those who regularly turned to their friends.

Animal studies also support the notion that company prevents misery. Squirrel monkeys become more agitated if alone when confronted with a boa constrictor than when several monkeys confront the snake together. Mice that are injected with cancer cells and then isolated develop tumors more rapidly than those who remain with their cage mates.

The warm family support given to Barney Clark was considered by his doctors to have been crucial to his remarkable endurance after receiving the artificial heart. Lonely heart attack patients have been shown to live longer when given a pet. Herpes sufferers seem to be helped just by participating in a self-help group. Says U.C.S.F. Psychiatrist Horowitz: "These self-help groups, for everything from single parents to rape victims, are very useful. They replace the small town systems that we've lost."

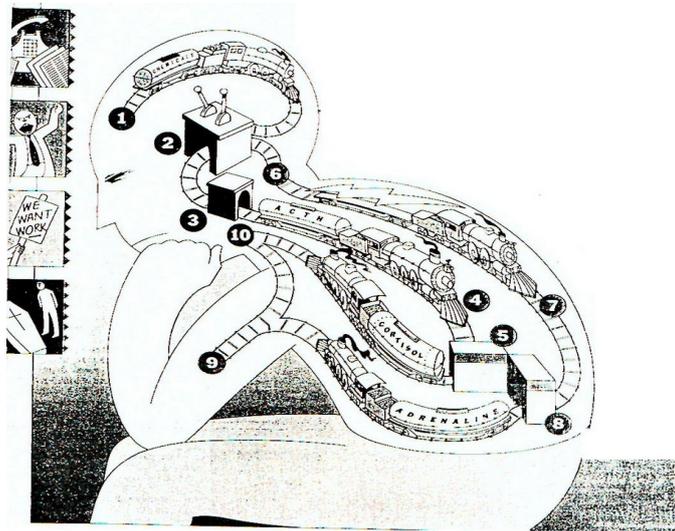
Studies of former Viet Nam prisoners of war have revealed that communication with fellow captives, sometimes involving complex tapping codes, was a vital factor.

## Tracking The Chemistry Of Stress

In response to causes of stress, ranging from overwork and quarreling to loss of a job *or* a death in the family, chemical messages (1) are carried along neuron tracks in the outer edge of the brain to the hypothalamus (2), stimulating the production of the chemical CRF. Acting as a switching station, the hypothalamus sends the CRF and other chemical messengers down two tracks.

The first track goes to the pituitary (3), where the chemical freight is changed again, this time into the hormone ACTH. It enters the bloodstream (4) and travels on to the outer layer, or cortex, of the adrenal glands (5). Here ACTH initiates the production of Cortisol, a chemical that increases blood sugar and speeds up the body's metabolism. On the second track, messengers leave the hypothalamus and trigger electro-chemical impulses down the brain stem (6) and spinal cord (7), until the signals reach the core of the adrenal glands (8). The result is a release of epinephrine (adrenalin), which helps supply extra glucose to serve as fuel for the muscles (9) and brain, and norepinephrine, which speeds up the heartbeat and raises blood pressure.

Both tracks feed back to the pituitary (10) to regulate further the stress response.



Dr. Hans Selye, the father of stress research, mapped the hormonal pathways shown in the illustration above some 40 years ago. Since then, scientists have found that stress provokes a number of even subtler chemical changes in the body that may have profound effects on health, both physical and mental. "There is a constant intertwining of stress systems," says Stanford Neurochemist Jack Barchas. "It's much like a symphony."

Over the past two decades, researchers have learned that stress triggers chemical changes in the brain. Particularly sensitive to emotional strains are the concentrations of potent chemicals called neurotransmitters, which act as messengers between nerve cells. Among these messengers: serotonin, epinephrine (previously called adrenaline), norepinephrine, acetylcholine and dopamine. In a study at Stanford, rats were forced to swim in 4°C water for three minutes. Examination of their brain tissue afterward revealed that levels of norepinephrine had fallen 20% and epinephrine 30% to 40%. Scientists also discovered that the body produces its own painkillers, morphine-like chemicals named endorphins. Stress boosts the production of these analgesics, raising the pain threshold. This may explain the mystery of why seriously injured soldiers often feel no pain.

Because stress alters the body's chemical balance, it seems to influence the development of many diseases, including psychiatric disorders. Depression has been associated with low levels of two neurotransmitters, serotonin and norepinephrine. Similarly, schizophrenia seems to be related to an excess of dopamine.

Perhaps the most significant new discovery about stress is its deleterious effect on the immune system. Researchers have discovered that the body's production of its own cancer-fighting cells, including natural killer cells, T-lymphocytes and macrophages, is inhibited by chronic stress.

In late 1981 scientists at the Salk Institute synthesized the remarkable chemical that triggers the body's stress reactions. As illustrated above, the substance, called corticotropin releasing factor (CRF), is produced in the hypothalamus, a tiny but powerful structure sometimes called "the brain's brain." Having duplicated CRF, the Salk scientists now hope to produce a modified version of the chemical that would actually block the body's reaction to stress.

In a book to be published this fall, one former P.O.W. relates that even while he was being beaten by his captors, he could hear other prisoners tapping out the supportive message "God bless you, Jim Stockdale."

Other studies of prisoners and hostages have also pointed up the importance of maintaining a sense of control over one's environment. NIMH Psychologist Julius Segal was astonished to learn that one of the American hostages in Iran achieved this by saving a bit of food from his meals and then offering it to anyone who came into his cell. That simple coping strategy had the effect of turning the cell into a living room, the hostage into a host welcoming visitors.

Research with animals has shown that when stressful stimuli can be regulated, they are rendered less damaging. University of Wisconsin researchers exposed monkeys to loud, irritating noise but allowed half of them to interrupt the sound by pulling on a chain. Though both groups of monkeys were exposed to the same noise, those with access to the chain showed lower levels of stress-related hormones in their blood. Being in control seemed to make the difference.

The same appears to be true of workers. Robert Karasek, an industrial-engineering professor at Columbia University, has found that people who have little control over their jobs, such as cooks, garment stitchers and assembly-line workers, have higher rates of heart disease than people who can dictate the pace and style of their work. Telephone operators, waiters, cashiers and others whose work makes substantial psychological demands but offers little opportunity for independent decision making are the worst off. This combination of high demands and low control, concludes Karasek, appears to raise one's risk of heart disease by "about the same order of magnitude as smoking or having a high cholesterol level."

In recent years doctors have come to recognize another psychological factor that drastically increases an individual's susceptibility to heart attacks and other stress-related illnesses: Type A behavior. First identified by San Francisco Cardiologists Meyer Friedman and Ray Rosen-man, Type A has two main components, both of which can be recognized by giving standardized personality tests or conducting careful interviews with the patients. Says Friedman: "First, there is the tendency to try to accomplish too many things in too little time. Second, there is free-floating hostility. These people are irritated by trivial things; they exhibit signs of struggle against time and other people."

Type A has been accepted as a bonafide risk factor for heart disease by the American Heart Association and the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute. Studies have shown that Type A's respond differently to stress than do calmer people classified as Type B's. When Dr. Redford Williams at Duke University asked a group of male undergraduates to perform a mental arithmetic task (serial subtraction of 13 from 7,683), the Type A students produced 40 times as much Cortisol and four times as much epinephrine as their Type B classmates. The flow of blood to their muscles was three times as great, though there was no difference in their level of performance. "The Type A man is responding as though he were in an emergency or threatening situation," says Williams. The jolt of Cortisol and epinephrine, he speculates, "could be causing more fat to be released into the blood, which may later be deposited around the heart."

Mort Ciment, 59, was what Friedman would call a typical Type A. Excitable to begin with, he worked as a Los Angeles commodities trader, a job he likens to "being in a mad cage." When the market was really moving, he says, "there was terrible tension. You'd leave to go to the bathroom, come back and find the position horribly changed." When he got home, he admits, "my nerves were singing, and I'd take it out on the nearest person."

All that ended three years ago when Ciment had a heart attack. A quadruple bypass saved his life, and a chastened Ciment resolved to slow down. He quit his job to become a stockbroker in a lower-keyed office, and now devotes more time to hobbies. "Lining a coffin with gold," he says, "doesn't do the body any good."

Like thousands of other overwrought Americans, Ciment got professional help in learning to reduce and manage the stress in his life. At the California Institute for Behavioral Medicine in Beverly Hills, he underwent psychological counseling to change his Type A mind-set, began an exercise program and learned to modify his diet. Programs like the one he attended have been booming in recent years. By one estimate, there are now more than 300 stress-management enterprises offering their services to hospitals, clinics and even corporations around the ^^^ country, up from 120 last September. "Stress management has become a multimillion-dollar-a-year business," says Rosch of the American Institute of Stress.

Hospitals took the lead in treating stress by establishing clinics to help those for whom reducing tension was a matter of life and death: heart attack victims and severe hypertensives. Some of the advice offered to such patients is just plain common sense: quit smoking, lose weight, cut down on salt and caffeine (2 cups of coffee will double the level of epinephrine in the blood), take vacations regularly and exercise. In some cases drugs are used, typically beta blockers like Inderal, which interfere with the action of certain stress hormones. But the core of most stress-management programs, and what makes them distinctive, is teaching patients how to relax.

The guru of therapeutic relaxation is Cardiologist Benson. Back in 1968 he was persuaded by practitioners of Transcendental Meditation to study the effects of the technique on the body. To his surprise, Benson found that TM could elicit dramatic physiological changes, including decreased heart rate, lower blood pressure and reduced oxygen consumption. Meditation, says Benson, sets off "a built-in mechanism that is the opposite of the fight-or-flight response." Practiced ten to 20 minutes once or twice daily, it has been shown, by Benson and others, to produce a lasting reduction in blood pressure and other stress-related symptoms. Thus it is a natural antidote to tension.

TM is only one of several techniques that can be used to produce what Benson has termed the "relaxation response." The effect can be achieved just by following four simple steps: assume a comfortable position, close your eyes, concentrate on a single word, sound or phrase, and cast off all other thoughts. Instead of using the traditional mantra of TM, Benson's patients are encouraged to select a sound or image that appeals to them personally. One of his Jewish patients focuses on the word *shalom*; a Greek chants "*Kyrie eleison*" (Lord have mercy upon us); a Catholic recites the prayer "Lord Jesus have mercy"; others evoke the response by listening to soothing tapes of ocean waves. "As long as one can become passively unaware of the outside world," says Benson, "the method is not important."

In fact, techniques like muscle relaxation, biofeedback, self-hypnosis, rhythmic breathing and exercise can also elicit the relaxation response. These methods are now widely used at U.S. hospitals and clinics to treat such stress-related problems as migraine and tension headaches, Raynaud's disease (a circulatory disorder that causes painfully cold hands and feet), gastric ulcers and colitis. "Ten or 15 years ago, we thought there was no therapy for stress," says Stanford Psychiatrist Stewart Agras. "Now we know that relaxation is not a gimmick; it works."

At New York City's Columbia-Presbyterian Center for Stress and Pain-Related Disorders, Dr. Kenneth Greenspan claims to be able to reduce the severity and frequency of migraines in 80% of sufferers. The principal weapon: biofeedback. The patient is connected by sensor wires to a machine with a small screen that feeds back information on such physiological indexes of stress as blood pressure, tension in the facial muscles or, most frequently, the temperature of one's fingers—the colder, the tenser. By loosening their muscles, breathing deeply or letting their thoughts drift, patients learn that they can control their stress response; they can make their blood pressure drop or the temperature in their hands rise by as much as twelve to 14 degrees. After six to ten sessions, at \$150 each, patients are weaned from the machines and are able to elicit the relaxation response at home without mechanical prompting.

"All biofeedback does is make you more aware of what's going on in your own body," says Psychologist Lyle Miller, who uses the technique at Boston University's bio-behavioral sciences clinic. "There is a significant amount of voluntary control over so-called involuntary responses, as the yogis have demonstrated for centuries."

As biofeedback and other relaxation techniques gain acceptance, doctors are testing them against all sorts of ills. Duke Psychologist Richard Surwit has shown that biofeedback and progressive muscle-relaxation exercises can help diabetics maintain steadier glucose levels. At Children's Orthopedic Hospital in Seattle, Dr. William Womack helps youngsters contend with the strains of growing up. Kurt Russell, 16, was immobilized by migraines for days at a time until Womack taught him a self-hypnosis technique. Now symptom-free, the teen-ager travels twice a day to a peaceful place in his mind. "You imagine yourself in the woods or skiing," says Russell. "It's pretty neat."

Some of the most remarkable work in relaxation has been done with cancer patients, who often suffer excruciating anguish over the uncertainty of their future and the horrors of treatment. Chemotherapy can be especially devastating. Patients become so apprehensive that they may feel nauseated just at the thought of treatment, says Psychologist Thomas Burish of Vanderbilt University. "One woman even vomited in a drugstore when she saw the nurse who administered her therapy." Burish has helped cancer patients control their anxiety and nausea through biofeedback and progressive muscle-relaxation training. While the technique is not a cure, he says, "patients do gain a positive feeling of being in control again. It is one of the few things they can do to help themselves."

Regaining that sense of being in control is the principle behind another psychological technique designed to aid cancer patients. Devised by Fort Worth Radiologist Carl Simonton, the method requires the patient to imagine his tumor cells being hunted down and devoured by white-knight-like defender cells. Bizarre as it seems, the technique has helped significant numbers of terminally ill patients survive beyond all expectations, says Psychiatrist Cohen of Boston University. "How they do it, we do not know."

### **Learning to control muscle tension with biofeedback**

*"It makes you more aware of what's going on in your body."*

Someone lowers the lights, and the dozen people around the table close their eyes and breathe deeply. After a moment of silence, Dr. Margaret Caudill says quietly, "With each breath, you become more and more relaxed."

More moments of silence.

"With each breath," murmurs Caudill, "you go deeper and deeper into your own world." All is stillness in the room. Finally, Caudill says: "At the count of three, I want you to open your eyes and sit quietly before you come back into the world."

The ten-minute voyage away from the world is part of a weekly program at Boston's Beth Israel Hospital that uses techniques of easing stress to fight hypertension. Begun in September 1982, the program has succeeded in lowering the blood pressure of most of its participants. Besides relaxation techniques (imagine watching your breath go in and out), the regimen involves a low-salt, low-cholesterol diet emphasizing fresh food. (Cost of the program: \$750 for eleven group meetings, plus tests and an evaluation session with the doctor.)

Trying to meet the standards of the program, one man at the session mildly complains, is so hard that the very effort to cut back on salt makes his blood pressure rise. Caudill quickly reassures him. "We're not here to make you hysterical, pressured people," she says. "We're here to make you be practical and moderate, so don't get so worried about salt that it causes you undue stress."

"If we can't keep our thoughts focused, does that mean we're tense?" another man asks. "Other thoughts will come to you as long as you're alive," says Caudill. "But the idea is you don't get distracted. After a while, you will find that you have a 'quiet center.'"

Later, one woman tells how problems at work were increasing her hypertension. "The stress and tension remained in *me*. It was something I couldn't control." But Beth Israel's program began to help her handle her emotions. She quit smoking and became much more relaxed on the job. Best of all, she stopped taking the three kinds of medication she once needed for hypertension, and watched her blood pressure drop in just nine weeks from a high 170 over 100 to a normal 120 over 73. The stress she is under may be the same, she says. But, she adds, "it's all in how you manage it."

The relaxation boom has found a warm welcome in America's citadels of stress: large corporations. The reason, experts agree, comes' down to the bottom line. By encouraging workers to reduce the strains on their hearts, backs and psyches, corporations can begin to lower the \$125 billion or more annually spent on total health care for employees, a figure that has been rising by 15% a year. In addition, Benson points out, many firms are finally beginning to appreciate the long-established fact that too much stress makes workers inefficient. In 1908 Yale Psychologist Robert Yerkes, along with J.D. Dodson, demonstrated that pressure improves performance, but only up to a point; after that, efficiency drops off sharply. Relieving the strain with relaxation breaks, Benson concludes, "actually enhances performance."

About one out of five of the FORTUNE 500 companies now have some sort of stress-management program. Many are restricted to top executives, though studies have shown that the most stressed workers are in middle management. In addition to facing the pressures of climbing the corporate ladder, these workers are caught in a perilous bind: lots of responsibility but little control. Those who have surmounted these obstacles and made it to the top "have the fewest problems," says Dr. Gilbert Collings, corporate medical director of New York Telephone Co.

Corporate efforts to reduce stress range from the commonplace alcoholism program to on-premise exercise facilities, meditation classes and company-sponsored biofeedback. At the Equitable Life Assurance Society in Manhattan, employees with frequent stress-related health complaints participated in an in-house biofeedback program and reduced their average number of visits to the company medical office from two dozen annually to fewer than six. According to Psychologist James Manuso, who ran the project, Equitable saved \$5.52 in medical costs for every dollar invested.

At New York Telephone, a program involving periodic health exams for all employees and meditation lessons for those with stress-related symptoms has helped cut the corporate hypertension rate from 18%—about average for U.S. firms—to half that amount. New York Telephone estimates" that it is saving \$130,000 a year from reduced absenteeism alone.

Results like these have created an enormous demand for stress-management programs, and a small army of entrepreneurs has rushed in to fill the vacuum. New York Telephone's Collings reports getting "three or four offers a week to conduct relaxation programs." Not all of them are bargains. In an effort to bring some order to the booming and chaotic field, Rosch (whose respected American Institute of Stress is nonprofit) is establishing a data bank with information on the cost and effectiveness of stress-management programs. The result, he hopes, will be "a kind of *Who's Who* in stress. Right now there's no sense of pedigree."

Rosch and others point out that no single approach to relaxation is right for everyone. "Meditation may be good for somebody with hypertension," says Rosch, "and bad for someone with a peptic ulcer." One person may need psychotherapy to get at the roots of his Type A behavior, while another needs nothing more than regular exercise and vacations. Just as responses to stress vary widely according to age, sex, temperament and other factors, so do the requirements for treatment to offset it.

What no treatment programs attempt to do, however, is eliminate stress entirely. Nor should they. Hans Selye made a career of studying the ill effects of stress, but he nevertheless believed it was "the spice of life." Falling in love, catching a ride on an ocean wave, seeing a great performance of *Hamlet*—all can unleash the same stress hormones as do less uplifting experiences, sending the blood pressure soaring and causing the heart to palpitate madly. But who among us would give them up? "A certain amount of stress is a positive and pleasurable thing," says Neu-rochemist Barchas. "It leads to productivity in the human race."

As the relaxation boom spreads, as corporate America learns its mantras and chronic worriers unwind their minds, the point, then, is not to escape the effects of stress, which are inescapable in any case, but to channel and control them. Between the fight-or-flight spasms of too much tension and the dullness and dormancy of too little, the challenge for each person is to find the level of manageable stress that invigorates life instead of ravaging it. —By *Claudia Wallis. Reported by Ruth Mehrrens Galvin/Boston and Dick Thompson/ San Francisco*

### **How Vulnerable Are You to Stress?**

• The following test; was developed by Psychologists at the Boston University Medical Center. Score each item from 1 (almost always), to 5 (never), according to how much of the time each statement applies to you.

I eat at least one balanced meal a day.

I get seven to eight hours; of sleep at least four nights a week.

I give and receive affection regularly.

I exercise to the point of perspiration at least twice a week.

I smoke less than half a pack of cigarettes a day.

I take fewer than five alcoholic drinks a week.

I am the appropriate weight for my height and age.

I have an income adequate to meet basic expenses.

I get strength from my religious beliefs.

I regularly attend club or social activities.

I have a network of friends and acquaintances.

I have one or more friends to confide in about personal matters.

I am in good health

I am able to speak openly about my feelings when angry or worried.

I have regular conversations with the people I live with about domestic problems, chores, money and daily living issues.

I do something for fun at least once a week.

I am able to organize my time effectively.

I drink fewer than three cups of coffee (or tea or cola drinks) a day.

I take quiet time for myself during the day.

TOTAL

To get your score, add up the figures and subtract 20. Any number *over* 30 indicates a vulnerability to stress. You are seriously vulnerable if your score is between 50 and 75, and extremely vulnerable if it is over 75.

(Note: One question was not included because it was unreadable)

--Article from *TIME* magazine, June 6, 1983

§§§

## Benefits of Deep relaxation

### *"Studies Show Medical Benefits of Deep Relaxation"*

The simple act of becoming relaxed can have surprising health benefits, research is showing. In addition to the obvious psychological effects of relieving stress and mental tension, the findings indicate, deep relaxation, if practiced regularly, can strengthen the immune system and produce a host of other medically valuable physiological changes.

In asthmatics, for example, relaxation training can widen restricted respiratory passages. In some diabetics, it can reduce the need for insulin. In many patients with chronic, unbearable pain, it has brought significant relief.

Moreover, the research shows, relaxation may help ward off disease by making people less susceptible to viruses, and by lowering blood pressure and cholesterol.

Although such benefits have long been associated with one form of relaxation—meditation—the experimental evidence available now is much stronger than it was for meditation a few years ago. In addition, any form of deep relaxation seems to bring these benefits.

The medical advantages are not from ordinary relaxation activities, such as catnaps or gardening, but from intensive techniques that allow people to evoke a specific physiological state. "Just sitting quietly or watching television is not enough to produce the physiological changes," said Herbert Benson, director of the Division of Behavioral Medicine at Beth Israel Hospital, a part of Harvard Medical School in Boston. "You need to use a relaxation technique that will break the train of everyday thought and decrease the activity of the sympathetic nervous system."

Like meditation and yoga some of the relaxation techniques being used are ancient. Others, like bio-feedback or progressive muscle relaxation, are relatively new. Some, like repetitive prayer, may seem worlds away from medicine. All the techniques, though, seem to evoke the physiological state that Dr. Benson some years ago called the "relaxation response..

More and more doctors are seeing the value of these techniques as a way to tap the inner capacity of patients to help with their own healing," said Jon Kabat-Zinn, director of the Stress Reduction and Relaxation Program at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. A 57-minute relaxation videotape made by Dr. Kabat-Zinn is in use at about 100 hospitals.

The sympathetic nervous systems reacts to stress by secreting hormones that mobilize the body's muscles and organs to face a threat. Sometimes called the "fight-or-flight response," this mobilization includes a variety of biological reactions, including shifting blood flow from the limbs to the organs and increasing blood pressure. The stress response does not require an emergency; it can be triggered merely by worry and pressure.

The relaxation response releases muscle tension, lowers blood pressure and slows the heart and breath rates.

--Article from *International Herald Tribune*, May 18, 1986

§§§

## **Meditation as Medicine on the Rise**

Many moons ago, a wandering Nepalese prince sat under a tree, vowing not to rise until he attained enlightenment.

After a long night of deep meditation, Siddhartha Gautama, better known as the Buddha, saw the light and declared that suffering is subjective, and can be reduced through self-awareness.

Today, 2500 years later, a growing number of American doctors and healthcare workers are teaching people who are ill how to apply Buddha's epiphany to their lives.

In hospitals, businesses and community centers around the country, meditation is increasingly being offered as a method of stress reduction, and to help patients better cope with the physical pain and mental strain associated with many medical conditions, including heart disease and HIV infection.

Recent research shows meditation's soothing effects can be detected in arterial walls and in the brain. Once considered outside the mainstream, today more insurers are paying for meditation, both as a form of medication and as preventive medicine.

### **Learning to 'Disidentify'**

"Meditation is the act of disidentifying from inner thought flow and concentrating on calming and healing," explains Robert Thurman, Ph.D., a professor of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Studies at Columbia University in New York and the first American to become a Tibetan Buddhist monk. Through meditation, doctors help patients detach from their pain and anxieties and cultivate a connection between the mind and the body, he says.

While there are many kinds of meditation, the mindfulness approach, used widely in hospitals around the country, focuses primarily on breathing. Practices vary, but the basic idea involves sitting comfortably, with eyes closed, spine straight and attention focused on breathing.

Practitioners aim to maintain a detached, calm awareness of their thoughts and sensations. Through mindfulness, experts say, meditators learn to pay attention to the present and cultivate clarity of mind, equanimity and wisdom.

## **Minor Mindfulness Miracles**

All of which may sound very abstract. Unless, points out Jeff Brantley, Ph.D, Director of the Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR) Program at the Duke Center for Integrative Medicine in Durham, N.C., you are a patient who is suffering.

“We had one patient, a 40-year-old woman with metastatic breast cancer who was enrolled in the 8-week MBSR program. At her exit interview she said that before the course began 5 minutes wouldn’t go by without her worrying about what would become of her and her young family and now, after the class, she can concentrate on other things for more than hour at a time, even days,” Brantley says, calling the results “a minor miracle.”

The Duke program is one of at least 70 such mind-body based courses modeled on the University of Massachusetts Medical School’s Stress Reduction Clinic, in Worcester, Mass., created in 1979 by Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn. Taught mainly in hospitals around the country, mindfulness training is typically run as an 8-week-long outpatient program to complement other medical treatments.

The aim, according to a website dedicated to Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction, is to assist people in taking better care of themselves “through a gentle but rigorous daily discipline of meditation and relaxation.”

Doctors refer patients to mindfulness programs for any number of diseases and disorders, including heart disease, anxiety and panic, job or family stress, chronic pain, cancer, HIV infection, AIDS, headaches, sleep disturbances, type A behavior, high blood pressure, fatigue and skin disorders.

In keeping with the growing interest in preventative medicine, some insurance companies, such as Blue Cross/Blue Shield in Massachusetts and a number of insurers in what Thurman calls “the more enlightened states like Oregon and California,” are now paying for all or part of these programs.

## **Research for Coverage**

While the National Institutes of Health says it is too soon to quantify the medical benefits of meditation, Anita Greene, spokeswoman for the Institute’s Complementary and Alternative Medicine division, concedes, “It is a therapy worthy of further scientific investigation to refute or support the health claims being made.”

In fact, in 1999, the NIH granted Maharishi University of Management in Fairfield, Iowa, \$8 million during a five-year period to study the effects of meditation in African Americans with cardiovascular diseases.

Researchers at Maharishi say that relaxing and reducing stress through transcendental meditation may reduce artery blockage and the risk of heart attack and stroke, according to a study released in the March issue of the American Heart Association's journal *Stroke* (see related story).

Another recent pilot study, published in the May 15 issue of *NeuroReport*, by Sara Lazar, Ph.D., a Harvard research fellow in psychology at Massachusetts General Hospital, in Boston, suggests meditation activates specific regions of the brain that may influence heart and breathing rates. Using a brain imaging technique known as functional magnetic resonance imaging, or fMRI, Lazar measured blood flow changes in experienced meditators.

"What we found were striking changes. There was significant decrease in blood flow and activity in specific areas of the brain," says the study's senior author Dr. Herbert Benson, president of the Mind/Body Medical Institute at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, Mass.

The usual, fight-or-flight brain response liberates adrenalin and is stressful to the body, he explains, but during meditation the brain acts to quiet the body through concentrated breathing or word repetition, evoking a relaxation response that minimizes the harmful effects of stress.

"It does away with the whole separation of mind and body and gives further proof to insurers that [meditation] is cost effective," he says. Ultimately, Benson predicts, medicine will be akin to a three-legged stool, leaning on pharmaceuticals, surgeries and procedures, and self-care, which includes, meditation, nutrition, exercise and health management.

### A Tool for Transformation

But, Thurman points out, meditation is for more than just health benefits: It is a tool for seeking inner transformation. Meditation practices in the health field are secular, however.

"We get everyone from born-again Christians to avowed atheists. We tell people we are not trying to make anyone into anything," Duke's Brantley reassures. No matter what their religious persuasion, he says, patients find an increased awareness and appreciation of their lives.

Registered nurse Shirley Gilloti, a San Rafael, Calif., health educator and mindfulness training teacher agrees, "I tell people to try to bring more mindfulness to saying their rosary if that's what they do."

## Meet the “mindfulness” caucus: Politicians who meditate!

Congress is increasingly using "quiet time" and Buddhist teachings to inform its approach to politics.

“If this can help me, a half-Irish, half-Italian quarterback from Northeast Ohio, it’s for everybody,” **Congressman Tim Ryan** says of his meditation practice developed from Buddhist traditions. The lawmaker, one of a growing group of prominent politicians incorporating mindfulness into their worldview and approach, leans back in a chair in his Longworth House Office Building suite, which includes meditation cushions and signed footballs — and even a Bud Light on display behind glass (the aluminum bottle is made in his district). “It’s not woo woo!”

Despite not fitting the profile, Ryan has become an evangelist for meditation on Capitol Hill, encouraging his fellow lawmakers to try it, securing federal funding for a pilot meditation program at schools in his district, and even writing a book — *A Mindful Nation: How a Simple Practice Can Help Us Reduce Stress, Improve Performance, and Recapture the American Spirit* — on how he sees mindfulness as a cure to the stress of modern life, and something that can help heal Congress and the world. He’s even landed on the cover of *Mindful* magazine. And he’s not alone.

This year saw gains for bona fide Buddhists, with Mazie Hirono becoming the first to enter the Senate in history, and with fellow Buddhist Hawaiian Colleen Hanabusa in the House. And from New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, to health-conscious Bill Clinton, to redeemed Southern Republican lawmaker Mark Sanford, a growing number of politicians and the people they employ are getting turned on to the benefits of meditation, in general.

“If more people meditated, we probably would have less arguing, less animus, physically, mentally, and legislatively, and we’d probably have a lot more effective legislation because people would be coming from a much more balanced place when they’re doing their jobs as legislators,” said Los Angeles Democratic Rep. Tony Cardenas, who has been meditating twice a day for a little over a year (at least when his schedule allows).

Tara Brach, a prominent Buddhist meditation teacher who has led workshops organized by Ryan, agreed. “It’s happening all over the country, so it’s really natural that’s in happening where our leaders are working,” she told Salon. “It seems so important in a place like Capitol Hill, where our nation’s leaders are needing to be responding with as much wisdom as possible.”

Every week, Ryan hosts the **Quiet Time Caucus, an informal 30-minute moment of silence held in the Speaker's Chapel**. Lawmakers can meditate, do a Christian prayer like the centering prayer, or just sit there quietly. "Members of Congress never have a moment to just be quiet, from the moment they get up in the morning when they turn on Morning Joe or whatever, to meetings and votes all day, to the moment they fall asleep, often with the TV on," Ryan said. Quiet Time started with Ryan by himself, then a couple of colleagues trickled in, and now there are about six or seven. His office sends invitations to every other office on the Hill, though so far it's been all Democrats...

But many people who are not Buddhist adopt its mindfulness practice, and the religion. "Meditation has absolutely nothing to do with religion. Some people do it as part of their religion, but it doesn't have to be at all," Cardenas added, explaining that he's a Christian, but that he finds those two parts of his life reinforce each other. For him, it's about performance. "It helps me relax and stay focused, and when I'm relaxed and focused I'm more effective at my job as a legislator. In that sense, I find it very very beneficial," he told Salon.

Science has found evidence of all kinds of beneficial effects from meditation, from lowering stress, to improving sleep and brain functioning and even physical health. Recent research reported in the New York Times last week suggests that meditation can even make people more compassionate to each other, something lawmakers could probably use.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the country, Jerry Brown is having a second coming, earning plaudits for helping turn California around. Brown, who earned the nickname "Governor Moonbeam" during his first term in the 1970s, has spoken about his time studying Zen Buddhism in Japan and how his practice shapes his view of politics. "If there were a true religious spirit, we would have to radically change the way politics is conducted," he told Tricycle magazine. "When politicians are talking about religion, if they really had that as the doctrine of their life, they would have to get rid of homelessness and housing projects."

In New York, Attorney General Schneiderman is known to practice Buddhist meditation and is a big proponent of Yoga, sponsoring a bill to help studios as a state senator. A mini Buddha statue sits on his desk.

Meanwhile, Jared Bernstein, who served as Vice President Joe Biden's chief economist adviser and now writes for Salon, among other places, when he's not practicing Buddhist meditation, thinks mindfulness can help explain the world. In a recent talk he gave, he adopted the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism to an economic context, creating the Four Noble Truths of Full Employment. "I'm not trying to be glib here," he said. "I think it is consistent with ethical thinking, good economics, not to mention the values of Buddhism, to equate unemployment and suffering, especially long-term unemployment of which we still have more than any period on record going back to 1940s when that data series begins."

He has another mindfulness-inspired paradigm about how the difference between liberals and conservatives can be understood as the clash between two world views: “You’re on Your Own vs. We’re In This Together.”

But where Ryan really hopes to have an impact is outside of the Washington. “To me, this isn’t just about the mindfulness practice, it’s about how do we have a mindful nation?” he says, noting that everyone from corporate CEOs to pro-athletes are now turning to meditation to help them relax, focus, and improve performance. He wants to expand in schools as an alternative to prescribing drugs like Adderall, and thinks if more people started doing it, it would bring down health costs for employers, insurers and the taxpayers. **Even the Marines have a pilot program, which is showing promising results so far.**

*Alex Seitz-Wald is Salon's political reporter. Email him at [aseitz-wald@salon.com](mailto:aseitz-wald@salon.com), and follow him on Twitter [@aseitzwald](https://twitter.com/aseitzwald).*

§§§

# Chapter Five: Guidelines for Energization Exercises, Hong So e Raja Yoga Series Classes

## Protocol for Teaching Energization Exercises

### I. Introductory information

- **Why energize – the benefits, for a wide range of people**
  - **Physical benefits**
    - Muscle tone
    - Organs
    - Nerves
    - All systems: circulation, elimination, immune, endocrine, digestion and metabolism, etc
    - Purification all around, from muscles to cells
  - **Mental benefits**
    - Will power and determination
    - Concentration and focus
    - Clarity
  - **Spiritual benefits**
    - Will power, concentration
    - Detachment
    - Transforms cells into light
  - **Practical aspects**
    - Can be done anywhere, any time
    - No age limitation
    - Does not require special clothes or equipment
    - Takes little time relative to sports activities
    - Is free
    - Can be done standing, sitting, lying down (20 parts)
    - Requires no spiritual affiliation or belief, is a science that benefits everyone
- **What are the exercises**
  - **history**
  - **Main principles: draw and distribute unlimited cosmic energy/Prana**

### II. Energy

- Its importance to success, health and happiness
- Indirect forms of energy, such as food, sleep, coffee-tea-chocolate-sugar
- Subtle forms of energy: sunlight, breath
- All of the above are limited, indirect and not always available
- PRANA, what it is

### III. Will power

- What it is
- Its connection to energy: Great will = greater energy
- What strengthens willpower

- What weakens will power
- How the energization exercises develop will power
- EXERCISE: tense bicep of one arm beyond normal capacity; evaluate results; Compare to the other arm

#### **IV. How prana flows into the body and is distributed by will power**

- The medulla oblongata, the “mouth of God”. Spiritual eye as the seat of will power
- The chakras as distribution centers for prana to the body

#### **V. The two modalities of practice: gradual and resistance**

- Focus on the center of the muscle in all exercises, both modalities
- Gradual tension has 4 stages, up to Vibration, then down to Complete Relaxation
- Repeat exercise with bicep to demonstrate graduality to tension and of relaxation
- Teach the 20-part recharging, Phases I, II and V only
- Teach the other exercises that use Graduality: 4, 5, 6, 8, 19, 20
- Homework: practice 20-parts 3 times each day
- Principle of resistance; need to High Vibration from the beginning of the movement
- Teach at least 3 of the weight-lifting exercises

#### **VI. Teach the first half of the exercises**

- Start again with 20 parts, (Phases I, II, V) then go to Exercise 1
  - Demonstrate some, then practice. Do not keep them standing for long time.

#### **VI. Teach the second half of the exercises**

#### **VII. Magnetism**

#### **VIII. Self-healing: Life Therapy principles and some practices**

# Protocol for Teaching Energization Exercises for 4 Classes

## I. Introductory Conference information

- **Why energize – the benefits, for a wide range of people**
  - **Physical benefits**
    - Muscle tone
    - Organs
    - Nerves
    - All systems: circulation, elimination, immune, endocrine, digestion and metabolism, etc
    - Purification all around, from muscles to cells
  - **Mental benefits**
    - Will power and determination
    - Concentration and focus
    - Clarity
  - **Spiritual benefits**
    - Will power, concentration
    - Detachment
    - Transforms cells into light
  - **Practical aspects**
    - Can be done anywhere, any time
    - No age limitation
    - Does not require special clothes or equipment
    - Takes little time relative to sports activities
    - Is free
    - Can be done standing, sitting, lying down (20 parts)
    - Requires no spiritual affiliation or belief, is a science that benefits everyone
- **What are the exercises**
  - i. **history**
  - ii. **Main principles: draw and distribute unlimited cosmic energy/Prana**

iii.

## **LESSON ONE: Energy, will power, astral body, Modality A, 20-parts**

### **I. Energy-Prana**

- i. Its importance to success, health and happiness
- ii. Indirect forms of energy, such as food, sleep, coffee-tea-chocolate-sugar
- iii. Subtle forms of energy: sunlight, breath
- iv. All of the above are limited, indirect and not always available
- v. PRANA, what it is

### **II. Will power**

- What it is: Desire + Energia directed towards a Goal/Objective
- Its connection to energy: Great will = greater energy
- What strengthens willpower
- What weakens will power
- How the energization exercises develop will power
- EXERCISE: tense bicep of one arm beyond normal capacity; evaluate results. Compare to the other arm

### **III. How prana flows into the body and is distributed by will power**

- The medulla oblongata, the “mouth of God”. Spiritual eye as the seat of will power
- The chakras as distribution centers for prana to the body

### **IV. Modality A: gradual tension and relaxation**

- Focus on the center of the muscle in all exercises, both modalities
- Gradual tension has 4 stages, up to Vibration, then down to Complete Relaxation
- Repeat exercise with bicep to demonstrate graduality to tension and of relaxation
- Teach the 20-part recharging, Phases I, II and V only. Practice it many times, sitting, slowly; standing; lying down; standing a bit more quickly.
- Homework: practice 20-parts 3 times each day

## **LESSON TWO – Modality B and exercises 1-20**

*Begin the lesson with the practice of 20-part recharging, Phases 1, 2, 5.*

### **I. Teach the other exercises that use Graduality: 4, 5, 6, 8, 19, 20**

### **II. Principle of resistance; need to High Vibration from the beginning of the movement**

- Teach at least 3 of the weight-lifting exercises 21, 23, 24

### **III. Teach the first half of the exercises**

- Start again with 20 parts, (Phases I, II, V) then go to Exercise 1
- Demonstrate some, then practice. Do not keep them standing for long time.
- Homework: practice at home with the video exercises 1-20

## **LESSON THREE: Teach the second half of the exercises**

*Begin the lesson with the practice of exercises 1-20, adding phases 3 and 4 to the 20-parts.*

### **I. Review the two modalities.**

### **II. Teach Exercises 21-39**

## **LESSON FOUR: Magnetism, Success and Healing**

*Start the lesson with the complete practice 1-39*

### **I. Rapid Recharging practices, give the handout**

### **II. Magnetism and Success**

### **III. Self-healing: a few basic principles of self-healing and a few of Yogananda's Pranic Healing practices**

**MATERIALS** to be included in the cost of the course: Swami Kriyananda DVD, booklet of the Exercises. Handout for Rapid Recharging. Handout for Yogananda's Pranic Healing Exercises.

# Protocol for Teaching Hong So

## I. Introductory information

- **Why meditate** – the benefits, for a wide range of people
- **Video:** Keys to Inner Peace
- **What is meditation**
  - Calm the mind and emotions so as to perceive superconsciousness
  - Listening
  - Being centered within

## II. The three levels of consciousness: subconscious, conscious, superconscious

- **SUBCONSCIOUS characteristics**
  - Its nature: archive of past thoughts and actions; of emotional reactions
  - its good qualities: forms habits patterns, can be changed
  - Its limitations:
    - Emotions take control of our free will
    - Reactivity influences the conscious mind and perception of reality
    - Habits become entrenched
- **CONSCIOUS MIND**
  - Its nature: to analyze and make decisions
  - Its four aspects:
    - *mon* (perception);
    - *buddhi*(discrimination);
    - *ahankara*(ego);
    - *chitta*(reactivity, likes and dislikes)
  - **Its good qualities: will power, concentration, determination, planning,**
    - organizing
  - **Its limitations**
    - Relies on information received through imperfect senses
    - Information received from outside sources, not always reliable
    - Perceives in a linear way, the small rather than the larger picture
    - Analyzes by perceiving problems, separating, seeing differences,
      - exclusive choices
- **SUPERCONSCIOUS MIND**
  - **Its nature:** sees the whole picture, 360 degrees; sees connections; perceives directions more than just solutions.
  - **Its perceptions are:**
    - immediate, direct; intuitive

- unlimited, ever-new, eternal, constant/ever-present
  - universal, impersonal, unitive (finds relationships)
  - transforming, calm and yet dynamic; they change your life and evolution
  - Clear, simple
- **The 8 experiences of superconsciousness/God**
  - **The concept of Self-realization and teachings of Yogananda**

### **III. Concentration**

- Definition
- The enormous power of the mind
- Importance to success in all areas
- Distractions
- Importance to meditation

### **IV. Preparation (before meditation)**

#### ➤ **THE BODY**

- Charge with energy
- Relax tensions
- Proper posture: spine, hands, eyes

#### ➤ **THE BREATH: pranayama exercises – triangular breathing; alternate nostril**

#### ➤ **THE MIND: focusing on all of the preparation exercises**

#### ➤ **THE HEART: Chanting, prayer/invitation**

#### ➤ **CREATING THE ENVIRONMENT**

- Where: create a special area for meditation (only for meditation, spiritual activities, inspiration..); or find a church, park...
- Wool, silk, cushion...; empty stomach
- Right Time: 12am; 12pm; sunrise; sunset; night!
- How long: 5-20 minutes morning and night, slowly increase; OK music at the beginning; yes guided meditations

### **V. The Breath**

- Its importance to our life
- Why it is used as object of concentration
- Practice: awareness of breath
- Practice 2: letting the breath flow naturally and watching it at different places
- Practice 3: watching the breath at the spiritual eye

### **VI. The Mantra**

- What is a mantra
- Various kinds of mantras
- Bija mantras for meditation
- Meaning of Hong So
- Specific effects of Hong So on the mind, breath and ego
- Practice 1: combining the mantra with the natural flow of the breath, listening for the sounds of the movement of the breath, bringing mind back to the flow and the mantra
- Practice 2: longer, deeper practice, finish with silence at the spiritual eye

### **VII. The state of Meditation, Superconscious perceptions**

#### ➤ Repeat 8 experiences

- Practice 3: focus on the silent part of meditation

## **VIII. Meditation Routine**

- ✓ Preparation
- ✓ Technique
- ✓ Silent meditation, focused at the spiritual eye
- ✓ The return voyage from super-consciousness back to body awareness
- ✓ Using the calm mind in various ways:
  - Asking for inner guidance
  - Praying for others
  - Self-healing practices
  - Practice an affirmation
  - Write your inspirations in a spiritual diary

## **IX. Study Materials**

- ✓ Booklet+DVD How to Meditate
- ✓ DVD with Shivani's talk...
- ✓ Superconsciousness
- ✓ Booklet "What is Kriya Yoga"
- ✓ Guided online meditations on Sangha website

## **X. Introducing Kriya Yoga**

- ✓ Personal experience, perfect meditation practice for our times
- ✓ KY booklet

## Protocol for Teaching Hong So – Guidelines for Four-Classes

### I. INTRODUCTORY CONFERENCE INFORMATION

- **Why meditate – the benefits, for a wide range of people**
- **Video: Keys to Inner Peace**
- **What is meditation**
  - *Calm the mind and emotions so as to perceive superconsciousness*
  - *Listening*
  - *Being centered and balanced within*

### LESSON ONE: Superconsciousness, Preparation for meditation, observation of breath

#### I. The three levels of consciousness: subconscious, conscious, superconscious

- SUBCONSCIOUS characteristics
  - Its nature: archive of past thoughts and actions; of emotional reactions
  - its good qualities: forms habits patterns, can be changed
  - Its limitations:
    - Emotions take control of our free will
    - Reactivity influences the conscious mind and perception of reality
    - Habits become entrenched
- CONSCIOUS MIND
  - Its nature: to analyze and make decisions
  - Its good qualities: will power, concentration, determination, planning, organizing
  - Its limitations
    - Relies on information received through imperfect senses
    - Information received from outside sources, not always reliable
    - Perceives in a linear way, the small rather than the larger picture
    - Analyzes by perceiving problems, separating, seeing differences, exclusive choices
- UPERCONSCIOUS MIND
  - Its nature: sees the whole picture, 360 degrees; sees connections; perceives directions more than just solutions.
  - Its perceptions are:
    - immediate, direct; intuitive

- unlimited, ever-new, eternal, constant/ever-present
- universal, impersonal, unitive (finds relationships)
- transforming, calm and yet dynamic; they change your life and evolution
- Clear, simple

## **II. The concept of Self-realization and teachings of Yogananda**

### **III. Preparation**

- THE BODY
  - Charge with energy
  - Relax tensions
  - Proper posture: spine, hands, head/chin; eyes;
  - Wool/silk
  - Empty stomach
- THE BREATH: pranayama exercises – triangular breathing; alternate nostril
- THE MIND: focusing on all of the preparation exercises

## **LESSON TWO: Concentrazione, Respiro, Pratica – osservazione del respiro**

*Guided practice from the 1st lesson, beginning with Preparation. Questions/answers*

### **I. The 8 experiences of superconsciousness/God**

#### **II. Concentration**

- WHY - Importance to success in all areas
- WHAT - Definition
- The enormous power of the mind
- Distractions
- Importance to meditation

#### **III. The Breath**

- Its importance to our life
- Why it is used as object of concentration
- Practice: awareness of breath
- Practice 2: letting the breath flow naturally and watching it at different places
- Practice 3: watching the breath at the spiritual eye

## **IV. Creating the ENVIRONMENT**

- Where: create a special area for meditation (only for meditation, spiritual activities, inspiration..); or find a church, park...
- Right Time: 12am; 12pm; sunrise; sunset; night!
- How long: 5-20 minutes morning and night, slowly increase; OK music at the beginning; yes guided meditations

## **LESSON THREE: Mantra, Silent meditation, Opening the heart**

### **I. Guided practice from the last lesson, beginning with Preparation and include Alternate Nostril Breathing.**

Possibly introduce Hong So in the practice without explanation, which comes during the lesson. Questions/answers.

### **II. The Mantra**

- What is a mantra
- Various kinds of mantras
- Bija mantras for meditation
- Meaning of Hong So
- Specific effects of Hong So on the mind, breath and ego
- Practice 1: combining the mantra with the natural flow of the breath, listening for the sounds of the movement of the breath, bringing mind back to the flow and the mantra
- Practice 2: longer, deeper practice, finish with silence at the spiritual eye

### **III. The state of Meditation, Superconscious perceptions**

- Repeat 8 experiences
- Practice 3: focus on the silent part of meditation

### **IV. Opening the heart**

- Contact and collaborate with the spirit. Prayer as invoking the divine presence.
- Receptivity, Listening
- Devotional Chanting

## **LESSON FOUR: Routine, practices at the end of meditation**

**I. Guided meditation, complete practice. Include a chant, simple prayer. Questions/answers**

### **II. Meditation Routine**

- Preparation
- Technique
- Silent meditation, focused at the spiritual eye
- The return voyage from super-consciousness back to body awareness
- Using the calm mind in various ways:
  - Asking for inner guidance
  - Praying for others
  - Self-healing practices
  - Practice an affirmation
  - Write your inspirations in a spiritual diary

### **III. The importance of a spiritual guide**

### **IV. About the Path of Kriya and the Masters.**

Give each person the free booklet “What is Kriya Yoga?”

**V. Announce the 5th meeting, after a week or a few weeks, for complete practice.**

## **LESSON GIVE: Complete Practice. Questions/Answers**

### **Materials included in the cost of the course**

- Swami Kriyananda Lessons in Meditation, DVD, include with cost of course
- DVD Guided Meditations, include with cost of the course
- Booklet “What is Kriya Yoga”
- Guided online meditations on Sangha Europa website, how to register: [www.anandaeuropa.org](http://www.anandaeuropa.org)

## Protocol for a Raja Yoga Series in Ten Classes

### Suggested: 10 Saturdays:

- 15.30 to 17.30                      Class
- 17.30 – 17.45                      Tea break
- 17.45 – 19.00                      Energize and meditate

**Class One:**                      Sanaatan Dharma: Creation/Satchidananda/ Soul and Ego/4 stages  
Of evolution

**Class Two:**                      The 4 Paths of Yoga

**Class Three:**                      Patanjali, overview, Yogas Chitta Vritti Nirodh, the 8 limbs

**Class Four:**                      Yamas and Niyamas, in pairs, first 3 pairs

**Class Five:**                      Yamas and Niyamas, in pairs, last 2 pairs

**Class Six:**                      Energy, Magnetism, Success, Prosperity, Giving, Tithing

**Class Seven:**                      Karma and Reincarnation

**Class Eight:**                      3 levels of consciousness /Affirmations

**Class Nine:**                      Anatomy of Yoga: astral body, chakras, nadis

**Class Ten:**                      Yoga as a way of life; Path of Self-realization; Kriya Yoga;  
Importance of a

**Guru/Disciple** (introduction, bridge to Class Series on Discipleship)

**DISCIPLESHIP SERIES 4 CLASSES** of 1.5 hours, includes 20 minutes of meditation

- The Need for the Guru
- The Disciple's Part
- Attunement with the Guru
- Discipleship in Daily Life

## Chapter Five: Chanting

### From Cosmic Chants – Prelude (1938), Paramhansa Yogananda

Songs or chants are usually inspired through sentiment or passing interests. But a song which is born out of the depth of true devotion to God and which is continuously chanted, audibly or mentally, with ever-increasing deep devotion until response is consciously received from Him in the form of communion, ecstasy and boundless joy, is a spiritualized song.

Such songs like live marches produce the fire of God-contact whenever they are struck on the foundation-stone of devotion. Ordinary songs are like wet matches which do not produce any spark of God-contact.

Each of the *Cosmic Chants* in this book has been spiritualized, that is, each song has been sung aloud and mentally until it has found actual response from God. It is hoped that each reader will take these chants, not as ordinary music to please the ear or the emotions, but as soul-saturated chants to be used to produce the divine contact.

#### Sound Is the Most Powerful Force in the Universe

Sound or vibration is the most powerful force in the universe, and music is a divine art, to be used not for pleasure but as a path to God-realization. Vibrations resulting from devotional singing lead to the contact of the Cosmic Vibration or the Word. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”—John 1:1. God is the Word or the Cosmic Vibration.

Singers of these songs who want the best results should chant them alone or with true devotees of God, with ever-increasing devotion and fervor. After the notes are learned, one’s undivided attention should be given to repeating them with deeper and deeper devotion, striving to fully understand the meaning of the words in the chant, until one is immersed in the joy of singing. This joyous feeling is the first perception of God.

Words that are saturated with sincerity, conviction, faith and intuition are like highly explosive vibration bombs which have power to explode the rocks of difficulties and create the change desired.

The five states in chanting are conscious chanting aloud—whisper chanting—mental chanting—subconscious chanting—superconscious chanting. Subconscious chanting becomes automatic, with internal consciousness only, when the mind automatically repeats a chant in the background of thought and activity.

## **Superconscious Chanting Leads to Contact of AUM**

Superconscious chanting is when the deep internal chanting vibrations are converted into realization and are established in the superconscious, subconscious, and conscious minds. Holding the attention unbrokenly on the real Cosmic Vibration, AUM, not on any imaginary sound, is the beginning of real superconscious chanting.

One of the Ten Commandments in the *Bible* is: “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” Whenever one repeats a chant or prayer absentmindedly, without complete attention on the Lord, one has taken the divine name in vain, that is, without result, without utilizing the omnipresent power of that name and without receiving God-contact.

To repeat the name of God while thinking of other things is vain, for He does not answer such parrot-prayers. To repeat a prayer or chant with ever-increasing understanding and devotion is taking the name of God *not* in vain, but effectively. The mechanical or thoughtless repetition of God’s name is what the prophets warned us against. To sing sacred songs or to pray mechanically or absentmindedly in church or anywhere is taking the name of God in vain.

One who repeats these *Spiritualized Songs* or *Cosmic Chants* with ever-increasing devotion will find a more direct way to contact God than by the repetition of songs which are the outcome of blind sentiment and not of God-communion. These chants properly repeated will bring God-communion and ecstatic joy, and through these the *healing of body, mind and soul*.

### **Joy is the Proof that God Has Answered the Devotee**

Each of these chants should be sung not once but many times, utilizing the cumulative power of repetition, until the singer feels a great joy break through the radio of his heart. When this joy is felt it is proof that God has answered the devotee, and that his devotion has been properly tuned and the broadcasting of his ardor in chants has been true and deep.

When these chants are repeated in solitude or in congregational singing, with great devotion, it will be found that the songs subconsciously repeat themselves in the background of the mind bringing great joy even when one is in the thick of the battle of activity.

Gradually the subconscious repetition will change into superconscious realization, bringing the actual perception of God. One must chant deeper and deeper until all chanting changes into subconscious and then superconscious chanting which brings one into the divine Presence.

Each devotee should set aside a regular time for singing these songs. Chant first aloud, then whisperingly, then mentally. A group, gathered together in the name of God, can take one of these chants, singing it together loudly, with piano or organ accompaniment, then more slowly, then singing in a whisper without any accompaniment, and finally mentally only. In this way deep God-perception can be reached singly or together.

[signed] Paramhansa Yogananda

—Los Angeles, California; Dicembre, 1938

§§§

### *From Awaken to Superconsciousness, Swami Kriyananda*

*“Chanting is half the battle,” said Paramhansa Yogananda.*

Words are thoughts crystallized. Melodies are the resonance of the heart’s aspirations. Harmonies deepen the emotional power of those aspirations. And rhythms ground those aspirations in the present. Combining thought, melody, and rhythm in a spiritual discipline can provide a powerful force for awakening. This force must be used rightly, for just as it can be used to uplift, so can it also harm or debase.

During the time of Nazi Germany, highly effective, although negative, use was made of slogans, melodies, rhythms, and harmonies that entered the subconscious, influencing normally pleasant but suggestible people and sweeping them along on a tidal wave of mass hysteria and hate.

Chants can be powerful in a number of ways. Sri Ramakrishna, the great master, met a man who had a reputation for being a fierce disputant. In debate, the man was unbeatable. Ramakrishna was shown in meditation that this man’s success was due to a certain mantra (a powerful word-formula) that he repeated before every verbal encounter. Upon meeting him, and before the man could utter his mantra, Sri Ramakrishna repeated it loudly. The man was thereby stripped of his power, and lost his aggressiveness and conceit.

Another example of the power of mantra comes from the life of Paramhansa Yogananda, when he stilled a violent wind. The wind was a manifestation, he declared later, of the karma of World War II: in other words, of the energy that had been stirred up by the violence of that war. He recalled a mantra he’d learned as a child in India, and asked a disciple to repeat it while striking three times with her shoe on the porch where they were standing. Instantly, the wind subsided. An article appeared the next day in the Los Angeles Times commenting on the strong wind that had begun blowing the day before, and then, suddenly, subsided.

In a Yucatan jungle in Mexico, over forty years ago, I asked my guide if he had ever witnessed a rain dance.

“It is interesting you should ask that,” he replied. “As it happens, I was in this area once, years ago, when the land was experiencing a severe drought. I came upon a village where, in the zocalo (town square), I saw a rain dance being performed. I stood for a time, watching the dancers. All of a sudden, out of a clear blue sky, dark clouds gathered. Moments later we were drenched in a great downpour.”

I knew of a man in India who had a mantra to cure cobra bites. He worked in a telegraph office. Telegrams arrived there frequently from remote parts of the country, requesting cures. The effectiveness of his cure was legendary.

The power of mantras and chanting doesn't come automatically. Will power and concentration are needed, and inner attunement with the words.

The spiritual purpose of chanting is not to develop powers, but to give one control over the mind, that he may direct it one-pointedly toward God. If chants and mantras can bestow power over objective nature, how much greater their effectiveness when their aim is to benefit the chanter himself. The highest purpose of chanting is to help awaken us to our own spiritual potential: to bring us closer to Self-realization.

Spiritual chanting is heartfelt prayer, deepened by the dimension of music and by the building power of repetition. Repetition is not for the purpose of getting the Lord's attention: It is to deepen the intensity of one's own prayer. To repeat a chant mechanically, in a singsong manner, has virtually no spiritual value.

Spiritual chanting is different from singing songs or hymns. I've written well over a hundred songs myself – for instruction, inspiration, and reflection. Such music serves a different purpose, however. Though it may inspire, it doesn't lift the mind into a meditative state.

### **How to Chant**

The art of chanting correctly is, first, to practice it with full awareness of its inner purpose. That purpose is not to awaken sentiments or to stir up the emotions. It is to focus the heart's feelings and raise them toward superconsciousness.

The Maharani of Cooch Behar told me she'd once asked her family priest why he intoned his chants so loudly. “Well, you see, your Highness,” he explained, “God is far away. If I don't shout, how will He hear me?” God isn't far away, of course. It is we who distance ourselves

from Him by the “noise” in our own minds, a noise people often carry with them into their prayers and meditations.

Loud chanting does have its place. It is good at the start of meditation – not for the reason that priest gave, but to command attention from our own minds. For loud chanting creates a magnetic flow. Like a mighty river, it can dissolve the eddies of thought and feeling that meander idly along the banks of the mind. Like a magnetic military leader, it commands attention from your thought-soldiers and fires them with zeal.

Once you’ve got their attention, chant more softly, more inwardly. Direct your energy upward, now, from the heart to the Spiritual Eye.

Once your conscious mind is wholly engaged in chanting, bring it down into the subconscious by whispering. While chanting in the subconscious, offer the chant there, too, up to superconsciousness at the point between the eyebrows, until you feel your entire being vibrating with the words, the melody, and the rhythm.

At last, chant only mentally, at the point between the eyebrows. Let your absorption lift you into superconsciousness. Once it does so, and once you receive a divine response, you will have spiritualized the chant. From then on, any time you sing the chant it will quickly carry you again to superconsciousness as if on a magic carpet.

To spiritualize a chant, keep it rotating in the mind – for days at a time, if necessary: not only in meditation, but as you go about your daily activities. This practice is also called japa. Christian mystics, too, speak of the continuous “prayer of the heart,” and of “practicing the presence of God.” All this is japa.

The higher aspect of chanting involves listening to the mighty sound of AUM, and becoming absorbed in it. You’ll hear this sound first in the right ear. Gradually let it permeate the brain and the entire body, until every cell vibrates with that sound. After that, try to hear AUM in everything you do, in everything you perceive. This is true japa, when the mind no longer repeats words, merely, but is intoxicated with the bliss of the “music of the spheres.”

The Cosmic Sound is described variously in the world’s scriptures. The Jews and Christians call it the Amen. Muslims call it the Amin. To the Zoroastrians it is Ahunavar. To Hindus and Buddhists it is AUM. In the first chapter of the Gospel of St. John, the Cosmic Vibration is called the Word: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

The word AUM is an attempt to capture in human speech the sound of the Cosmic Vibration. By attuning one’s consciousness to that sound (by Christians called also the Holy Ghost and the Comforter), one enters the stream of vibration that proceeded out of the Spirit, and that merges back into the Spirit at creation’s end and at the end of the individual soul’s cycle of outward wandering. By merging in AUM, liberation is attained.

Once the mind is focused by chanting, and the inner energy is awakened, take your chanting inward. Don't only "make a glad noise unto the Lord," as the Bible puts it: Listen for His answer. Meditation is listening, as I've said. Feel yourself chanting in attunement, above all, with the Cosmic Sound. Harmonize yourself inwardly with that sound.

Harmony is an aspect of music not usually included in traditional chanting. In the West, where harmony is so intrinsic to musical expression, one may wonder if the lack of harmony in Eastern music is not due simply to a lack of musical sophistication. I recall the first time I heard spiritual chanting. I'd been raised on Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and other classical Western composers. I'd also studied singing in the Western classical tradition. Compared to that music, the stark simplicity of chanting seemed to me almost naive.

It was only when I got deeply into it that I understood its spiritual power. And it is only since composing music myself, complete with harmonies, that I appreciate more fully the fact that, although harmony lends richness and emotional depth to music, its very complexity prevents it from bringing melody into deeper harmony with AUM.

Even though I try, in my own music, to write chords that will help the mind to flow in an upward direction, I am well aware that the true "music of the spheres" lies far beyond outer harmonies. It creates another kind of harmony in the soul.

### **What Words to Use?**

There is not a strong tradition of chanting in the West. Most of the chanting I've heard has been Gregorian chant, which is little heard outside of monasteries, or chants transported from India. Buddhist chanting, like Gregorian chant, is a recitation of scripture and is not, therefore, an appeal of the heart to God. The Indian form of chanting usually involves repeating various names of God. Since these names are foreign to most Westerners, and don't possess the deep emotional associations they have for most Indians, they are less deeply meaningful, in themselves, than they are for people who grew up in India, or else are not always meaningful in the same way.

I suspect that for most Westerners the words have more a mantric influence than a sentimental appeal. The sounds uplift, but the words are less easily associated in the Western mind than in the Indian with mental images of Rama with his bow, Sita in her selfless service to Rama, Krishna with his flute, Ganesha with his elephant's head, and so on. The extreme antiquity of Hindu culture has guaranteed an abundance of symbols, most of which have lost their inner meanings even for Hindus. The lack of such visual associations with the names may, in one way, be an advantage for Westerners, since it forces them to focus more on the sounds of the names, as they allow those vibrations, which are powerful, to uplift them.

Other aspects of the Indian chants – the melodies and the rhythms – are often soul-stirring, and need no further explanation. India has developed a tradition of chanting as an

expression of deep, intimate love for God. There is power in such chanting, even if you don't really relate to the words you're singing.

Paramhansa Yogananda, as a great yogi whose mission was to disseminate the yoga teachings in the West, introduced a new kind of chanting here. It is based on the repetition of meaningful phrases, rather than of the divine names. Some of the chants he wrote he translated from Bengali or Hindi songs. Others, he wrote himself. This kind of chanting is more like a repetitive prayer set to music, and is better suited for meditators, who understand the importance of combining the soul's appeal for divine grace with self-effort. For by singing God's names only, what remains in the mind is the thought "God will do it all for me." What Yogananda's method of chanting accomplishes is to awaken in the mind the thought "In these ways I will cooperate with His grace."

*One of his chants goes:*

*I am the bubble, make me the sea.  
So do Thou, my Lord! Thou and I, never apart,  
Wave of the sea dissolve in the sea,  
I am the bubble, make me the sea.*

Very simple, you see? And very easily memorized. When such a chant is sung repeatedly, the mind is easily lifted up into meditation.

Some of Paramhansa Yogananda's chants go further in the direction of personal affirmation, and are less similar to the traditional concept of prayer. An example of such a chant begins with these words:

*Why, O mind, wanderest thou?  
Go in thine inner home!"*

These chants, too, are powerful, spiritualized as they were by a great master. They are in many ways better suited for people who follow the path of meditation. I myself have sung them for as long as I've been meditating – nearly fifty years. The inspiration I derive from them is precious to me beyond words.

--From *Awaken to Superconsciousness, Chapter Thirteen*

§§§

## ***Guidelines for Chanting, Swami Kriyananda***

### ***From a letter written to community leaders in 1998***

Master NEVER played Indian chants for group singing. He could easily have sung *Maha Mantra* (“Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna hare hare!”, etc.), or one of the other simple chants we all do. I do know that in recounting the life of Sri Chaitanya he once sang “Radhe, Radhe, Radhe Govinda Jai! Spirit and Nature dancing together.” But it was usually in the context of that story, and by his translation he gave it a spiritual meaning.

Even in India, the only story I heard of his chanting in a group was of one night when he sang and danced all night. It was in Calcutta. A huge crowd joined him. They filled the house, then the street outside the house, then covered the surrounding roofs. They all danced joyfully the whole night. And the chant he sang on that occasion—in Bengali—was “Door of My Heart.”

In fact, he brought to the world a whole new style of singing to God. His chants are NOT like traditional Indian chanting.

So there are several factors I’d like to consider. Let’s begin with the last of them. Master’s mission was to *spiritualize* America and the West, not to *Indianize* us. He himself loved Indian music, and was exceptionally well versed in the Indian style of playing and singing. Even so, he didn’t involve Western audiences in it, and from all I can tell he even sought to inspire the audiences in INDIA with his new style of chanting.

So: Does this mean we should give up the Indian chants altogether?

No, I don’t think so. There is much more exposure to Indian culture nowadays than there was in his time. He himself would sometimes sing Indian songs for us, in the Indian manner—Tagore’s songs, and others...

But Master didn’t sing those chants that recite all those names of deities. Even when singing to Radha and Krishna, he universalized the concept by his translation: “Spirit and Nature dancing together!” Still, some of the Indian chants ARE beautiful. I’d be sorry to give them all up, and I don’t think I’m intruding a merely personal preference in saying so. I simply don’t think that, basically, this is what we either want or need.

At the same time, I don't think the mere fact that a chant is Indian is sufficient reason for singing it. Many of those Indian chants are neither beautiful nor inspiring. They haven't a good melody. They produce a lot of noise, but no deep feeling. I think we need to be more selective in the chants we use, and especially to sing those with real beauty rather than select them merely for their Indian-ness.

And I really think we shouldn't sing so many of them. We are disciples of a new ray, and within that ray a new kind of music has been produced. I think we should honor this fact, and emphasize it more.

The next point has to do with emotionalism. Most Ananda members were raised on emotional music, so it comes naturally. I had my own share of this exposure, too, though later in my boyhood, and it never really sank in because I didn't particularly enjoy it. Nevertheless, there is bound to be a tendency to LIKE sounds that remind us of the music we grew up with. And this means liking, and then WANTING, the emotional side of chanting and singing.

I worry about this fact, because music is so much more than entertainment. It doesn't merely REFLECT a state of consciousness: It also GENERATES it. A taste for emotional music, if it is too much encouraged, will almost certainly change Ananda's very state of consciousness, in time—its underlying vibration.

There are three ways of expressing emotions musically: through melody, chords, and rhythm. Even an uplifting melody can be dragged down by chords that are too emotional, and by a heavy rhythm. Chords, if too heavily emphasized, can keep the music on an emotional level. And too heavy a downbeat in the strumming of the guitars will also emphasize the emotions, and feelings that strengthen the ego with their implied affirmation, "I WANT! I LIKE! I DON'T LIKE!"...

How much should we use chords? You'll notice that in my album, *Kriyananda Sings Yogananda*, I hardly use them at all. I chant much more in the style Master used. At the same time, this album is more for individual singing than for large groups, and therefore doesn't even try to be rhythmic.

Back to the question of chords, then: I'd say, don't feel that chords are essential to our chanting. MELODY is what's essential. People who find chords easier to play, and who therefore skimp on playing the melody or omit it altogether, ought to try to learn to play the melodies, and to play them correctly. It isn't enough only to sing them. The practice of playing chords without melody is getting too far away from Master's style of chanting.

Secondly, it would help, as you get deeper into a chant, to get away from playing the chords altogether and concentrate entirely on the melody. Through the melody you'll find it easier to attune yourself to AUM than you will by continuing to emphasize the emotional feelings awakened by chords. Go from outer exuberance to quiet absorption within...

... guitars can be great also, if not over-emphasized. Stronger strumming at the beginning of a chant session can yield to gentle finger-picking as the chanting gets deeper. Outer exuberance should be replaced gradually by inward depth.

*Sankirtans* should include short, then long and then gradually longer periods of meditation. The purpose of all chanting is to take us inside, not to keep us shouting out loud to God.

Most Indian chanting is a recitation of names of God, with an occasional "*namo*" thrown in. Are all those names really meaningful to any of us? We haven't grown up with them. They aren't a part of our culture, nor of the way we think.

I was asked recently in an interview, "To which Hindu symbols do you feel most attracted?" I had to answer, "To none of them, particularly! I'm a yogi. Symbols are for people who feel more drawn to the outward aspects of religion."

Master, too, placed minimal importance on deities, symbols, etc. As his disciples, I think we ought to recognize that many of those Indian chants, most of the names in which aren't even recognizable to us, are more a means of letting off emotional steam than of really deepening our devotion...

Let's try our best to follow Master's way, and to tune in to the divine ray he has brought into our lives. The more we do so, the faster we'll all grow spiritually.

*In divine friendship.*

§§§

## ***When to Use The Cosmic Chants, Paramhansa Yogananda, 1938***

Each of these *Cosmic Chants* has been composed to satisfy a special need of mind or life. The devotee's various moods and inner desires can be strengthened or changed by the repetition of one particular chant suitable for that purpose. The chants given in this book are classified for use by the devotee as follows:

*No Birth, No Death*—For overcoming religious, racial or social prejudice, and for achieving non-attachment to all human ties.

*Deliver Us From Delusion*—For invoking the Guru's\*(1) help for freedom from ignorance, sickness or failure.

*In the Land Beyond My Dreams*—For consciously ascending to God.

*Polestar of My Life*—Sing when experiencing failure in business or failure in trying to contact God.

*Where Is There Love?*—Sing when feeling forsaken or disillusioned by earthly love.

*They Have Heard Thy Name*—Sing when feeling forsaken by friends, fortune or health, or when interceding for others.

*Thou Art My Life*—To sweeten a sour disposition.

*I Will Drink Thy Name*—For inspiration; chant before preaching to others.

*Wink Did Not Touch My Eyes*—Sing during spiritual restlessness and anguish for God.

*Today My Mind Has Dived*—Use after meditation to go into deeper meditation, or when one does not find God after several meditations.

*I Will Never Forget Thee*—Sing when feeling far away from God, to strengthen the inner tie with Him.

*Divine Gypsy*—Chant when feeling enslaved by any habit or person.

*Blue Lotus Feet*—For invoking the unconditional love of God as the Divine Mother.

*Ever-New Joy*—Sing when trying to meditate on God and to feel Him as the cosmic endless Joy.

*What Lightning Flash*—Use to visualize God as Cosmic Light.

*Wake, Yet Wake, O My Saint*—To change business into spiritual consciousness, and to use when one, after having formed and then neglected the habit of meditation, wishes to resume it.

*I Will Be Thine Always*—Sing during bereavement, loss or parting of friends.

*Come Out of the Silent Sky*—To be mentally chanted during deep meditation or chanted aloud after meditation. Concentrate on the sky, mountains and soul when uttering those lines.

*In the Temple of Silence*—Chant when restless, worried or angered.

*Om Brahma*—Sing after meditation.

*Hymn to Brahma*—Use to invoke the help of the Masters or Guru.

*O God Beautiful*—Sing to realize God as visible nature and as all the beautiful sentiments of man.

*I Am the Bubble, Make Me the Sea*—To expand the little body-consciousness into the consciousness of the vast ocean of Spirit.

*My Soul Is Marching On*—Use to banish fear, failure or discouragement.

*Listen To My Soul Call*—Chant before meditation.

*Om Chant*—Invocation to God as the Cosmic Vibration and to the Masters and Great Ones.

*Door of My Heart*—Chant when feeling intense need for the instantaneous divine Presence. Sing this chant immediately upon awakening in the morning.

*Om Song*—Use when meditating on God as Cosmic Sound and Vibration and when meditating on the six spinal centers.

*When My Dream's Dream Is Done*—For overcoming the fear of death and achieving ascension to God.

*Light the Lamp of Thy Love*—For illumination and invoking God.

*Desire, My Great Enemy*—To conquer material desires.

*Who Is In My Temple?*—For divine ecstasy.

*Thousands of Suns*—For wisdom.

*God of Beauty*—To make body, mind and soul beautiful.

*From This Sleep, Lord*—For final salvation, and overcoming fear of death.

*I Give Thee My Soul Call*—To quicken our return to the Mother of the Universe.

*Listen To My Song*—For invoking God as Spirit.

---

*\*(1) Guru—One and only preceptor, sent by God.*

§§§

### ***The Different States of Chanting, Paramhansa Yogananda***

Remember again that the affirmations must be practiced with the proper loud intonation, fading into a whisper, and above all with attention and devotion, taking the thought from the auditory sense to the understanding or conscious mind, thence to the sub-conscious or automatic mind, and then to the Super-conscious, with conviction about their efficacy and truth. To those who believe, these affirmations will cure them, and Yogoda will teach them how to prevent disease forever, as well as cure it.

The following chart shows the order of the various consecutive chanting states:

|                |         |        |               |                 |
|----------------|---------|--------|---------------|-----------------|
| Conscious Loud | Whisper | Mental | Sub-conscious | Super-conscious |
|----------------|---------|--------|---------------|-----------------|

Sub-conscious chanting becomes automatic, with internal consciousness only. Super-conscious chanting is when the deep internal chanting vibrations are converted into realization and are established in the super- and sub-conscious minds as well as the conscious mind. Holding the attention unbrokenly on the real Cosmic Vibration, not on any imaginary sound, is super-conscious chanting.

--*Scientific Healing Affirmations, 1924 Edition*

§§§

## ***Superconsciousness – Not Unconsciousness, Paramhansa Yogananda***

One very important point to bear in mind is that when passing from one state of chanting to another, the attitude of the mind should likewise change, and become deeper and more concentrated. The aim is to unite chanter, chant and the process of chanting into one. The mind must sink itself into the deepest conscious state, NOT UNCONSCIOUSNESS, or absent-mindedness, or sleep, but such a focused concentrated state of absolute consciousness that all thoughts are sunk and merged into the one state, like particles drawn to an irresistible magnet.

*--By Paramhansa Yogananda – Scientific Healing Affirmations, 1924*

§§§

# Chapter Seven: Guidelines to Create a Meditation Group

## Introduction

"Meditation groups should be organized ...with the purpose of knowing God by the power of united concentration and meditation. Group meditation is a castle which protects its new spiritual aspirants as well as the veteran meditators. Meditating together increases the degree of Self-realization in each member of the group by the law of invisible vibratory exchange of spiritual magnetism." Swami Sri Yukteswar

Dear friend,

Organizing a group and bringing people together in their quest for God is one of the most satisfying ways to serve our guru. Group "*satsang*" strengthens everyone's meditation practice and creates a bond of spiritual fellowship among the participants. Through regular meditation with others, our spiritual search is deepened and our spiritual magnetism is enhanced.

Master said that "millions will find God through this work." As his disciples we are each called to serve in some way. Those who give heart and soul to reaching out to others as channels of Master's inspiration form a network of light which spans all over the world --a little family within the larger spiritual family.

This booklet is meant to serve as an introduction and guidebook to help you get a meditation group started. If you already have a new group or wish to start one, we encourage you to come to our meditation-group training program, during which we discuss all aspects of how to coordinate group activities.

Each summer there is also a meditation groups' retreat for the older groups, when leaders from around the world come to get spiritually recharged, meet their brothers and sisters on the path, and discuss ways to better serve Master's work.

We very much encourage you to spend as much time at Ananda Assisi as possible. To help you in this, we offer all active group leaders who have taken the training program the possibility to stay here on a donation basis. Come, then, as often as you can, and also keep in regular contact with us so that we can better support you in your service.

You can call upon us for resources, guidance and encouragement. We are happy to assist you in all phases and steps, as your fellow gurubhais and friends in God.

## **What is an Ananda Meditation Group**

An Ananda meditation group is created so that Yogananda's devotees might have an opportunity to meditate deeply with each other, to learn and practice the teachings of Self-realization, and to enjoy spiritual friendship, support, inspiration, guidance, and a sense of family. This is what initially attracts some people to the group. An Ananda meditation group is a way for people to open their hearts to God in each other. The sense of community--built on Ananda's four pillars of satsang (spiritual fellowship), sadhana (spiritual practices), study (of the teachings of Self-realization) and service (to God, Gurus and our fellow man)-- will be an important ingredient to the long-term success of a group.

Ananda supports everyone in his search for God and promotes friendship and understanding between religious groups. An Ananda meditation group, however, is more specifically a gathering of spiritual seekers who meet regularly to meditate and practice the teachings of Paramhansa Yogananda. Adherents of other traditions are welcome to attend, but the spiritual focus of the group's activities is directed toward the techniques and traditions of the Ananda line of gurus: Jesus Christ, Babaji-Krishna, Lahiri Mahasaya, Swami Sri Yukteswar and Paramhansa Yogananda.

Swami Kriyananda, direct disciple of Paramhansa Yogananda and founder of Ananda communities, has written many books, which show how the teachings of Self-realization are applicable in various aspects of life. They are a treasure trove from which you and the group can draw inspiration and spiritual guidance.

Ananda Meditation Groups vary in size from a few friends meeting in a private home, to larger groups who rent space in a public facility. Groups which meet for meditation, either in private homes or in other locales, and are guided by people who have received meditation group leader training, are referred to as "Meditation Groups;" whereas groups which have a dedicated public space and offer classes and other activities in addition to meditations, and which are guided by Ananda teachers or Ministers, are known as "Ananda Centers." New groups, where the coordinators have not yet taken the training, are initially referred to as "Groups in Formation," while individuals who do not have a group but who wish to form one, or who are teaching Ananda Yoga or meditation, are designated as "Contacts." A list of groups, centers and contacts appears on our website.

### **Non Ananda-affiliated Groups – Yoga Sangha**

There are some situations in which a group might not wish to be affiliated with Ananda, even though the coordinators are Ananda members. For example, an Ananda Yoga teacher might offer her students a meditation evening adapted to their needs. We are happy to give support to the leaders of such non-affiliated groups. It is not uncommon for such a group to eventually evolve into an Ananda Meditation Group.

## **Are you ready to form an Ananda Meditation Group?**

Here are some questions to ask yourself and steps you can take:

### **Group Coordination**

Groups almost always begin because of one person's initiative. If you are that person, you will see that the spiritual rewards of starting a meditation group are high, but you should also expect some demands upon your time to coordinate, organize and lead. Is this something you can joyfully accept? In time you will attract others to help you with these duties, but at first these responsibilities will be yours alone.

### **Where to meet**

Do you have a room in your home where the meditation group could meet? Do you have a friend or know of someone who is willing to offer his home for the meetings? A successful group needs a regular place to gather. Sometimes when a home is not available, the group can rent a room or an apartment in their local neighborhood.

### **When to meet**

Plan to meet at a time that is most convenient for you and the members of your group. Most groups meet on a weekday night. Some groups meet on Saturday afternoon or on Sunday morning. The important point is to choose a time to which you can regularly commit. Meeting haphazardly will cause confusion and will not be conducive to creating a strong magnetism. You may want to invite people in your area who have visited Ananda to an introductory gathering to discuss possible times and days for the meditations.

### **Where two or three are gathered**

Do you have a friend who would like to meditate with you? A good way to begin is to ask another committed devotee to join you for three months in order to get the group launched, and then see what happens. In this way you will be guaranteed that at least one or two others will be in attendance during your initial start-up phase. Almost all groups are small in the beginning. Then, with steady persistence, you can begin to attract others, using suggestions described in the section of this booklet entitled "Promoting your Group."

## **The Leader's Role**

Important to the success of a meditation group is leadership. Swami Kriyananda has often said that a meditation group will, to a large extent, be a reflection of those who act as its leaders. The key ingredients to being a leader of an Ananda Meditation Group are attunement and willingness. The more you are in tune with Yogananda and the divine ray he brought, the more you can help others to find this attunement themselves. A leader is someone who is willing to take responsibility in order to serve others. The best leaders are those who humbly give of themselves for the highest interest of the group.

Ideally, an Ananda Meditation Group leader will be a Kriyaban, or at least a disciple of Paramhansa Yogananda who is actively working towards Kriya.

Usually the leader acts as coordinator and organizer for the activities of the group and is the main contact with Ananda for the group. But as a leader you want to also share responsibilities with others by asking group members to become involved. This will be beneficial both for the individuals and for the group. Serviceful and willing members make for a successful meditation group. Remember Ananda's motto: "Many hands make a miracle."

You don't need to be able to teach philosophy and meditation techniques to be a successful meditation group leader. At first you should use resources available from Ananda for those who wish to learn to meditate and energize. In time, you will want to learn how to teach these practices yourself.

The Ananda Raja Yoga School of Europe offers training, and an internationally-recognized diploma, for those who wish to teach meditation and Energization. For details, see [www.anandaeuropa.org](http://www.anandaeuropa.org)

As a group leader you can learn a lot from the experience of others. A healthy dose of common sense is essential, but you can gain much by consulting with representatives of Ananda, or with other group leaders. Ultimately the truest guidance comes from God. You should remain aware that your highest responsibility is to serve as a channel for God's will. The greatest preparation for this role is through your personal practice of meditation, service, and devotion, and through the deepening of your relationship with God and Guru.

Finally, it is the sharing of your enthusiasm and loving vibrations with others that will most affect the members and the direction of the group. That is what people will remember!

### ***Checklist for Leaders***

Here are a number of activities recommended to all members of Ananda. As you and your group try to include them in your lives, you will reap their benefits: a greater understanding of the teachings of this path; a stronger connection with Ananda; a better ability to offer guidance to your group; and an ever-deeper feeling of joy.

- Read and re-read *Autobiography of a Yogi* and other works by Paramhansa Yogananda
- Read *The Path* and other works by Swami Kriyananda
- Study Kriyananda's lessons, *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga*, and also the *Lessons in Discipleship*
- Learn the Energization Exercises, Hong Sau and Aum techniques and develop a regular practice twice each day
- Take Kriya initiation
- Take a period of spiritual seclusion at least once each year
- Visit Ananda at least once, and preferably more often each year
- Attend the annual Ananda Meditation Group Retreat
- Connect regularly with the Ananda Kriya Sangha staff
- Integrate voluntary, serviceful activities into your daily life
- Develop the habit of sharing God's abundance with others
- Create a resource library of books, tapes and videos
- Make joy and laughter a constant part of your daily life and infuse your relationships with the presence of God

•

## Excerpts about “leadership” from Kriyananda’s books

From *The Art of Supportive Leadership* - Chapter 10 - 11

Genuine leadership is of only one type: supportive. It leads people: It doesn’t drive them. It involves them: It doesn’t coerce them. It never loses sight of the most important principle governing any project involving human beings: namely, that *people are more important than things*. (chapter 1)

\*\*

The most important thing in leadership is to keep the creative energy flowing. As long as it continues to do so, that flow will itself generate ideas. It will melt away obstacles, open up new possibilities, and create a host of undreamed-of opportunities.

(chapter 9)

\*\*

To win the support of others, one must first give *them* support. ..

Never domineer your subordinates. *Invite* their response. Suggest your ideas. Give them the freedom to accept or reject your proposals. If they are allowed to reach your conclusions at their own speed, they will be far more likely to get behind your ideas and implement them.

Try never to impose your authority. See if you can’t win people to your way of thinking, instead.

A corollary rule, and one which I personally consider fundamental (although I doubt you’ll find it in any other book on leadership), is this: Accept only as much authority as people are willing to *give you*. Even then, handle it sensitively, as a gift...

A good leader should also be willing to do the lowest and most difficult task. He should never assign jobs to others that he would not be willing to perform himself. Always, he should feel that it is his place to serve others.

Finally, he should always look ahead to the time when he will have to step aside and allow others to take charge. As all life is said to be a preparation for the “final examination” of death, so all leadership should be viewed as a preparation for that moment when one passes the reins to his successor.

On how well your organization functions *after* you leave it, quite as much as on how well it is functioning now, can your true skill as a leader be judged. It is a sad fact that organizations rarely continue to flourish after their founders’ passing.

(chapter 10)

\*\*

As a leader, you will get the best results for the least amount of effort if you work with those who are in tune with your ideals. You would be wise not to give a disproportionate amount of energy to those who are not in tune. Creativity cannot thrive where too much effort is devoted to merely holding the line.

If you develop a nucleus of people who work well with you, and who work well together, others will be drawn in by the magnetism they generate. The stronger the vortex of positive energy, the greater the creative flow. This is the opposite teaching from the well known saying, "A chain is only as strong as its weakest link." True, if you are working with a chain you'd better see that every link in it is strong. More often, however, you'll be working with vortices of energy. In this case, you'll only dilute their energy if you devote much time to negative vortices, which may seem more like black holes in outer space, drawing even the light rays inward to themselves, than like stars that emit light...

In a large undertaking, it is impossible not to have to work more closely with some people than with others. Be impartial, however, in your respect and friendship for all.

Select those with whom you work closely for their qualities of selflessness, of putting the good of all ahead of their own personal interest. And then don't by-pass the lines of authority.

Don't worry too much about negative energy, if it arises—unless, indeed, you are conscious that a crisis is actually looming. For negativity, generally speaking, has little cohesive power compared to the magnetism that is generated by those who put out positive energy, and who set good examples...

If anyone has suggestions to make, try to get him to implement them himself. If he expresses criticism, ask him to propose solutions to the problems he sees. Then, if possible, assign him to carry out his proposed solutions.

It is easy to tell others how they ought to behave, or what they ought to do. But once the carping critic finds that by his complaints he is likely to draw more responsibility onto his own shoulders, he will be more likely to temper his criticisms with charity, and with practicality.

As for outright dissenters in your organization, give them, if possible, a chance to show themselves up—or, alternatively, to show themselves in the right, in which case everyone should be grateful for their suggestions. But if you don't give them this opportunity, they will continue to grumble, and their dissension to fester. For there will always be a few who will listen to them. No one will listen, however, once by their own actions they have proved themselves wrong....

Encourage those who are willing, rather than those who demonstrate unwillingness. For usually it is no specific request you make of people that renders them either willing or unwilling. It is some habit in them, a reactive mechanism they've developed for handling every challenge....

In matters of leadership, never speak from your personal likes and dislikes, and especially not from a level of emotion. Speak from a sense of justice, of what is right and true. There is nothing so likely to win you disrespect from your subordinates as any uncontrolled display of emotion.

When dealing with individuals, put any prejudices you may have resolutely aside. Think of others with empathy, as their sincere friend—or as though you were perceiving them, not at, but *from* their own inner center. Try to reflect back to them that judgment, that advice, from their own higher self which they may be too confused to perceive themselves.

Remember, finally, that the best work is always done through inspiring people, never by driving them to work.

(chapter 11)

**From *Material Success through Yoga Principles***

The difficulty in working with people is that they have their own priorities, which must be treated as facts even if they are, in fact, mere delusions....

*Those who work under you will enjoy working with you, if they respect and like you, and if you treat them well.* If you make no effort to win their support, they will find ways of subtly undermining anything you attempt. Sometimes it may be better to give in to people's wishes and opinions, even if you consider your own ideas to be better than theirs. Most decisions are not crucial, after all, to the success of an enterprise. More important to its long-range goals is everyone's cooperation and harmony.

It is particularly important to *show* your support...

Never give supreme importance to passing issues. Things will change, but why change with them? In your true Self, indeed, you can never change. You will remain *You* for all eternity, a spark of the Infinite. There will never be a duplicate copy...

See leadership as a training ground for infinite consciousness. See yourself as *giving* light, not as receiving it. See all things—all creation—as needing what you have to give. Nourish all creatures in your light. Give to all of them your love.

See to it that your feeling for others remains impersonal, in the sense of asking nothing for yourself. Be concerned for the individual well-being of everyone.

(from Chapter Ten, *How to be a Good Leader*)

## **How to structure a meditation evening**

### **Energization Exercises**

These exercises were developed by Yogananda and are a good way to begin your evening. They form the foundation for the other techniques of this path and their practice is essential for those who plan to eventually learn Kriya Yoga. Ananda has instructional videos of Swami Kriyananda teaching the Energization Exercises which you can use to teach the group. You are very much encouraged to take the teacher training course in Ananda Assisi to learn to lead the energization exercises correctly and to eventually be able to offer classes in this technique.\* Most groups begin their sessions with these exercises. You might want to have one person lead the experienced practitioners while you work with the newer ones on learning a smaller portion of the exercises. If you are not yet an authorized Ananda teacher, you can lead the new people in Swami Kriyananda's Superconsciousness Exercises.

### **Meditation**

New members are encouraged to learn the meditation technique of Hong Sau as soon as possible. They need not be committed to this path in order to practice it. The experience that comes from this practice, however, awakens many people to the power of this path. Generally, Hong-Sau can be taught by using the meditation course and video available through Ananda, and then practicing together under the guidance of the group leader. Group leaders, or other Kriyabans in the group who qualify, are urged to participate in the meditation teacher training programs offered in Assisi – [www.ananda.it](http://www.ananda.it) // [www.anandaeuropa.org](http://www.anandaeuropa.org)

A recommended meditation time for new meditators is about 20 minutes. It can be helpful for new meditators to use one of the guided meditation tapes from Ananda as an introduction to the meditation period. Later, as members become experienced, sessions can be extended to 30-45 minutes or longer.

Some groups also have longer meditations intended especially for kriyabans and disciples. It is important for the stability and attunement of the group, as well as the personal growth of the more advanced members, that the disciples and Kriyabans meditate together, and that they also meditate with the newer members when possible.

## **Chanting and Prayer**

Chanting and prayer are integral practices of the path of Kriya Yoga and are a wonderful way to open the heart to feel God's presence and to create a spiritual bond within the group. Yogananda often said: "Chanting is half the battle!" Both the musical notation and words of many of the chants used at Ananda are available. For those who do not play an instrument for leading chants, some tapes and CDs are available that can be used to great effect.

Begin and end your meditation sessions with a prayer. This sets the tone for the evening and opens our hearts to receive the blessings of the techniques we practice. The path to Self-realization as outlined by Paramhansa Yogananda is a combination of meditation, devotion and service.

## **Yoga Postures**

Although yoga postures are not an essential part of the path of Kriya Yoga, it might be helpful to start the evening with a short practice of asanas, pranayama and relaxation. Some group leaders who are also Ananda Yoga teachers offer yoga sessions apart from the meditation evening. Yoga classes attract more people to the group and can also help finance the costs of renting a center. Training in Ananda Yoga is offered at Ananda Assisi through the Ananda Yoga Academy of Europe, [www.anandayoga.eu](http://www.anandayoga.eu).

## **Healing Prayers**

Closing in an uplifting way is important. A good way to do this is to spend two or three minutes in silent prayer at the end of the meditation period. During this time, those present can visualize people they know who are in need of healing. Mentally surround these souls with light and send them blessings. Then conclude with a healing prayer and the use of Yogananda's technique for healing at a distance. Resources and instruction on how to lead healing prayers are available through Ananda. A good way to include members in an active way is through a Healing Prayer Circle in which you regularly pray for others.

## **A Sample Meditation Evening**

1. Begin and end at the announced times. Typically most group meetings last no longer than an hour and a half.

2. Group energization is a good way to begin because this allows late arrivals to enter and join in during the exercises without causing a disturbance. Those who don't know the exercises can practice Swami Kriyananda's Superconsciousness Exercises. It is ideal if someone could lead these in a separate area.

3. When people are seated, begin with Yogananda's prayer: "Heavenly Father, Divine Mother, Friend, Beloved God, Jesus Christ, Babaji-Krishna, Lahiri Mahasaya, Swami Sri Yukteswar, and Paramhansa Yogananda; saints of all religions, we humbly bow to you". Continue the prayer according to your own inspiration, or read a prayer from Whispers from Eternity or Affirmations for Self-Healing.

4. Sing one or more of Yogananda's or Kriyananda's chants together. If you do not play harmonium or guitar, use one of Ananda's tapes.

5. Guide the group in the initial two pranayama practices: three to six cycles of the triangular breath and three cycles of tensing and relaxing with double breath. This can be done before or after the chants.

6. Then guide the group in watching the breath and practicing the Hong Sau mantra. Experiment with how long you wish to meditate: start with 20 minutes, and if that is comfortable for the group, work up slowly to 45 minutes or longer.

Optional - Play a tape of one of Kriyananda's guided meditations.

Optional – Swami Kriyananda has suggested for all group meditations in the Ananda communities and meditation groups to read a passage from Yogananda's "scriptures:" The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita; Revelations of Christ; The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam.

If read before meditation, better choose a devotional topic or one on meditation. If you read at the end of the meditation period, the passage chosen could serve as the basis for a brief group discussion.

7. Close the meditation period with a chant and/or AUM, or a group affirmation which you can select from Scientific Healing Affirmation or Affirmations and Prayers for self-healing.

8. Include a short reading from our teachings if you wish.

9. Healing prayers.

If you wish, you can end the evening with light refreshments and sharing. Some groups end their evenings in silence, or alternate between sharing and silent departures.

## **Integrating New Members**

As your group grows in magnetism, people will be attracted to it. Those who attend for the first time will often not know how to meditate or will not be familiar with the techniques of our path. Integrating them into the meditation group in a way that offers them a positive experience and at the same time does not diminish the experience of the older members can be very challenging.

Some groups have responded to this challenge by requesting that group members who want to bring a new person invite that person to talk first with the group leader, who can give them some basic information about the group and beginning instruction in meditation.

Group leaders or other certified teachers in the group can meet with new people for a half an hour or so before the group meditation, perhaps for several times, giving them basic instruction. Or, even better, a class series can be started for new people every two or three months. Those in the class who want to join the group can have their own, separate guided meditation sessions for a few weeks until they feel confident enough to join the group and meditate for a longer period.

For groups which do not have an Ananda meditation teacher, new people can learn to meditate by watching the meditation class dvd either at home or in a group, and can be encouraged to study the meditation lessons in *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga*, and also in *Awaken to Superconsciousness*.

## **The Meeting Place**

When you are looking for a place in which to start meeting, try to find one that has positive and peaceful vibrations. Most groups start out by meeting in the home of one of its members. In order to create an atmosphere that will help the group to enter into deep meditation, the place should be uplifting. Important features to help to make it so are: an altar, comfortable and adequate seating, cleanliness and neatness, lack of noise and distractions, ventilation and good lighting. For seating, we have found that a combination of chairs, cushions, and kneeling benches will accommodate most needs. These are available from [www.innerlife.it](http://www.innerlife.it).

### ***Other Possible Locations***

Many groups eventually decide to find a place outside of someone's home, such as a room in a yoga center, bookstore or cultural center, or a whole apartment, enabling the group to have more activities.

### ***Altar***

Ananda Meditation Groups should have an altar with the pictures of our line of gurus. Ask others in your group to help you set it up and light candles on the altar at the start of the program. Fresh flowers will add a touch of beauty and devotion.

The usual order of the pictures on the altar, as Paramhansa Yogananda did it, is from left to right: Lahiri Mahasaya, Babaji-Krishna, Jesus Christ, Swami Sri Yukteswar, and Paramhansa Yogananda. Copies of the original photograph of Lahiri Mahasaya are available from Ananda Sangha.

Photographs of other saints or masters should not be placed on the altar. Ananda's founder, Swami Kriyananda, requests that his photo not be placed on the altar, which is reserved for the avatars of our path.

## Other Activities

As the group grows and the individual members become deeper in their practices, they will want to have other opportunities for *satsang* and for learning more about the teachings. You might consider proposing some of these activities, in addition to the weekly meditations.

### Studying the Teachings

Regular study of the teachings and writings of Paramhansa Yogananda and Swami Kriyananda brings strength and energy to the group and cultivates a deeper understanding of the spiritual path. Resources are available from [www.anandaedizioni.it](http://www.anandaedizioni.it) [sangha@ananda.it](mailto:sangha@ananda.it) and include audio tapes, CDs, videos, and books. You should create a lending library of the main resources, and also have some of them available for sale so that members can study them at home. Groups receive a discount, which varies for the various products.

When the members begin to express a desire to know more about this path and the teachings, it can be helpful to form a study group on *Raja Yoga*, using Kriyananda's book of this title, and eventually a group to study the *Lessons in Discipleship*. Suggested outlines for these study programs are available from Ananda Sangha.

### Kirtans

Yogananda emphasized the importance of chanting when he said: "Chanting is half the battle." Since our path is a combination of meditation and devotion, chanting helps people open their hearts and feel the divine love and joy that Master and Kriyananda put into the chants. If you have musicians in the group or at least someone who loves to play our chants on the guitar or harmonium, you could have an occasional evening dedicated to kirtan. Or you might dedicate one meditation each month to kirtan, with more chants than usual and a little less meditation. Please read the section on Chanting which follows in Chapter Fourteen.

### Celebrations and Ceremonies

Many groups have special evenings for the Masters' birthdays and *mahasamadhis*, and often for Christmas, Easter and the New Year. The Kriya Sangha staff is happy to help you with ideas for these occasions.

## **Excursions**

It can be great fun and spiritually uplifting to travel somewhere together: to Ananda Assisi, on a pilgrimage to near-by shrines, to a beautiful place in nature, on an Ananda pilgrimage to India or California. As soon as possible, and as often as possible, try to bring new people to Ananda Assisi, so that they can see the larger context of which your group is a part. During certain periods of the year, group rates are available.

## **Guest Day**

People who are curious about meditation and about the group often do not feel comfortable attending a meditation session right away. You might want to plan a meeting every once in awhile which is an informal sharing of information and inspiration about our path.

There are two dvds about Ananda which you can show (*Ananda Europa* and *Ananda World Brotherhood Colonies*, in both English and Italian). Also inspiring is the 10-minute dvd presentation called "*The Gift of Inner Peace*," also in English, Italian and in Spanish. Also available are short video talks by Swami Kriyananda from the Indian television series on Aastha channel, "Conversations with Yogananda." These are in English with Italian subtitles.

During such an event it is important that each member of the group participate in some way. There can be refreshments, perhaps some chanting, sharing of personal experiences, even a brief guided meditation. The atmosphere should be warm and informal, so that new people can feel comfortable and get to know the members of the group and something about the path.

## **Service is Joy**

"Service is joy!" is one of Ananda's mottos. Through service we open our hearts to an awareness of God's love and joy flowing through us. Yet some leaders make the mistake of trying to do all the serving themselves. Ultimately, this become burdensome, but more importantly, it deprives others of the opportunity and the blessings of serving. As Yogananda said: "The instrument is blessed by that which flows through it."

An Ananda meditation group can offer its members innumerable opportunities to serve. It is a good idea from the very beginning of the group's existence to involve the members in the group-related responsibilities, such as setting up the room and the altar, cleaning, greeting people when they arrive, and calling the members from time to time to remind them about the activities. As the members serve, they are more actively and more deeply drawn into the group's magnetism, and they will feel a greater connection with the Masters and with each other.

## **Ideas for Service Opportunities**

- \*Be in charge of arranging the altar and/or bring flowers for it.
- \*Be responsible for guiding some part of the evening: the opening prayer, the chant, the reading, the healing prayer or affirmation.
- \*Call the members to remind them about the meetings.
- \*Organize the room before the meetings; help clean it afterwards.
- \*Greet people as they come to gatherings.
- \*Bring the tea or other refreshments.
- \*Take literature about your group and about Ananda Assisi to local bookstores.
- \*Organize a table at a local faire that deals with healing or spiritual themes.
- \*Arrange for newspaper announcements or articles.
- \*Take care of the group's finances.
- \*Organize a lending library of books, tapes and videos.
- \*Donate to the group and to Ananda Sangha for Self-realization.
- \*Help organize a special celebration for one of the Masters' birthdays or mahasamadhis.
- \*Keep a mailing/phone list of members and other interested people.
- \*Send announcements of your activities to the list of people sent by the Sangha Office.
- \*Write a newsletter for the group, or do the graphic design for it.
- \*Create and/or maintain a web site for the group.
- \*Organize a special event, such as a kirtan, picnic, excursion, fund-raisers, potluck dinner.
- \*Help organize a visit to your area by the choir or one of Ananda's teachers.
- \*Bring a friend to visit an Ananda center or community.
- \*Bring someone new to the group at least once each month.
- \*Make it your job to give special attention to new guests.
- \*Be the designated person to answer questions about the path of Kriya Yoga.

## **Finances**

Yes, even an Ananda Meditation Group requires some amount money for such on-going expenses as the purchase of candles, flowers, books and tapes, meditation cushions and chairs, rent, heat and electricity, etc. It is important to the group and to the individuals that they help support the group financially. Sharing the financial responsibility will not place a burden on any one individual, and it will make everyone feel more a part of the group.

More important than just "sharing the burden" is a particular kind of attitude that needs to be nurtured: that of willingness to financially support one's spiritual path, to give of your energy in return for the blessings you receive. The inner benefits to the individual are great, and the meditation group is placed on a practical and sound financial foundation.

## **Generating funds for the group**

**Donations.** When the group is just getting started, it might be sufficient to have a collection basket that is passed around during the gatherings or placed by the door.

**Monthly fees.** As the group becomes more stable, it is be appropriate to invite the regular members to make a monthly donation, creating an operating fund that can be used to rent a room for the meetings, buy meditation cushions, books and other materials, or invite Ananda teachers for special programs.

**Sales.** Meditation groups can purchase books and tapes with a discount for resale to group members. These savings can help you establish the group's library.

**Fund-raising activities.** When the group needs to spend an exceptional amount of money, perhaps for chairs, cushions, etc, try to be creative in involving the group in some fund-raising activities. One group rented a space at a local fair and earned several hundred dollars selling homemade natural foods there. Another group had an auction where they sold items that had been donated by members and friends. Another group earned a similar amount cleaning at a construction site one Saturday.

## **Keeping the Account**

When a group is small, it is relatively easy to keep track of funds and they are usually kept in the possession of one of the members. As a group grows, a time will come when you need to become legally incorporated and establish a bank account. Someone in the group will need to serve as treasurer and do the bookkeeping. The Kriya Sangha office can help you with the details of incorporating your group and establishing your financial systems.

## **Supporting and being supported by Ananda Sangha**

Coordination, training, and spiritual support for Ananda meditation groups, Kriyabans, disciples, and teachers, come from the Ananda Sangha for Self-realization (also more simply called "Ananda Sangha Europa"), which is supported entirely by donations. It is essential, of course, that each group be supported by their local members. It is equally important that each group lend financial support the Sangha. This is usually done by each group giving an established monthly or quarterly donation to the Sangha, or by giving a tithe (a percentage) of their income. This act of mutual support generates an energy that increases the magnetism of Yogananda's work.

Each recognized Ananda Meditation Group is encouraged to belong to the Sangha as a group member, and to encourage each of its members to join.

Group and individual donations can be made in these ways:

**\*\*During your visit to Ananda Assisi, at the Reception Office. Inform them that you are making a donation for Ananda Sangha projects (<https://anandaeurope.org/donate/>)**

## **Promoting Your Group**

Many people in your area are looking for spiritual upliftment. Those who have read the *Autobiography of a Yogi* might be looking for a way to learn more about Yogananda's teachings. It is a service to let people know about your group. There is also a science and an art to communicating with the right vibration, through the right vehicles, and in the right places at the right times. Proceed creatively with energy and enthusiasm in the knowledge that there are souls waiting to know about this path and who are eager for spiritual support.

### **Bring a friend**

Swami Kriyananda says that we have a responsibility on the spiritual path to help others find God. Encourage all the members to bring their friends to some of the group's activities. You might want to have an occasional "guest" night with a special video or activity that would be appropriate for new people. Make sure that all new guests are given loving attention and that someone phones them later in the week to see how they enjoyed their visit to the group and to answer any questions about the evening or Ananda.

### **Phone calls**

It is very effective to call or text message the regular members occasionally and remind them about the activities. Personal contact is the best magnet to help them feel more welcome.

### **Mailing list**

Ananda has names of people in your region who have expressed an interest in Ananda and these teachings. These names are available to you upon request. You and others in the group can produce an amazingly good list yourselves just by taking the time to think of all the people in your area who might be interested: yoga teachers and students, healing therapists, etc. Anyone who has visited or expressed an interest in your group should be on your list, including current members, visitors, people who attended special events, people who have called for information, etc. Make sure that your phone contact person always takes the name and address of the callers. Someone in the group will need to maintain this list and print labels for mailings.

### **Website**

We will place information about your group on the Ananda Sangha website. In addition, some of the meditation groups have their own site. You will find their web addresses on the Assisi site, and you can visit them for news and ideas about creating a site for your group.

## **Flyer/poster**

You may wish to produce a flyer or poster, announcing your group's activities and post it in places where it will be noticed by those you hope to attract--at local bookstores, health food stores, libraries, universities, gyms, alternative healing therapists, massage centers, etc. Keep a list of local areas to poster and check the locations regularly. You can also use this flyer to insert in the Ananda Assisi programs and to distribute at local fairs and other spiritual events.

## **Group newsletter**

Larger groups with more than one weekly activity sometimes send regular newsletter to their mailing lists. The newsletter can vary from a simple, one-page sheet of information about group activities to several pages of excerpts from articles, inspiring thoughts and quotes from the Masters, pictures, and more. No matter how simple or complex, consistent, quality energy given in this way will strengthen the commitment of the regular members and draw new people to the group.

## **Local newspapers**

Many newspapers offer free announcements for local non-profit groups and events. Call them for information. There may be some newspapers or magazines in your area that might be interested in publishing articles about Ananda, about your group, or about a specific event, like an Ananda conference or concert. When you send a press release, remember to include some photographs. The Kriya Sangha staff can help you write a press release and give you suggestions for announcements or articles.

## **Bookstores and health food stores**

Visit local bookstores to see if they might like to carry Ananda products. Once people are exposed through the books and music they are more likely to seek further contact with these teachings. Some stores welcome periodic guest speakers to lecture on topics of interest such as meditation or yoga. This is a wonderful way to introduce people to your group.

## **Radio programs**

Many radio stations have talk shows. Maybe you can get invited to talk about meditation or these teachings! Or you can arrange for an interview with a visiting Ananda minister. Also, most radio stations will make simple public service announcements at no charge. Call your local stations for further information.

## **Television**

Yes, even television can be a vehicle to promote your group. One of the Ananda groups in Spain is often featured by a local channel. Some local TV talk shows give 30 seconds free time for people to give announcements about coming events. Call the "Public Service Director" of the station for more information.

## Fairs

A booth at a local fair can be fruitful. Have a display with a video, Kriyananda's music, books, tapes and literature from Ananda and about your group. Have members from your group tend the booth and talk with people. One meditation group offers several short introductory meditation, energy and healing classes during a fair. Whenever Ananda Inner Life has a booth at a fair, you are most welcome to bring information about your group and to be there yourself to talk with people.

Be creative and energetic. Drawing souls to God can be great fun!

## Contact with Ananda Sangha and other Ananda groups

**Ananda ministers and teachers** are happy to come in order to support and inspire the group and also to give conferences and seminars which can attract new people to the spiritual path and to the group. Contact [anandasangha@ananda.it](mailto:anandasangha@ananda.it)

Most of the meditation groups organize a **group visit to Ananda Assisi** at least once a year and sometimes more often. Rides can be shared or vans rented, and special fees can be arranged for the group. It is also possible to create a special program just for the group. To schedule such a visit, contact [anandasangha@ananda.it](mailto:anandasangha@ananda.it), for reservations, [info@ananda.it](mailto:info@ananda.it).

It helps to strengthen our spiritual life, and also the magnetism of the groups when people from the group participate in the community living programs at Ananda Assisi: the **Seva Program and the Full Immersion**. Encourage your members to consider this possibility, and they can be in touch with [darshan@ananda.it](mailto:darshan@ananda.it).

Another opportunity for having a deep Ananda experience is to participate in one of the **pilgrimages** to India or California. Keep current information available for your group, and encourage members to go on pilgrimage together. Their experience will enrich the entire group.

If there is another Ananda group near you, you might enjoy getting together for **special celebrations** or for kirtans.

## Resources

If possible you will want to have a library of materials available for the group members, and also, when you are organized as a non-profit association, you will want to have these materials available for sale.

We suggest these resources to start with, and then you can add others in time:

### **Books by Paramhansa Yogananda:**

*Autobiography of a Yogi*

*The Essence of Self-realization*  
*Man's Eternal Quest*  
*The Divine Romance*  
*Journey to Self-realization*

**Books by Swami Kriyananda:**

*The Path*  
*The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita*  
*Revelations of Christ, Proclaimed by Paramhansa Yogananda*  
*Conversations with Yogananda*  
*The Art and Science of Raja Yoga*  
*Awaken to Superconsciousness*  
*Lessons in Discipleship*  
*Kriya Yoga for the Modern Age*

**Audio and Video Talks and Courses**

*How to Meditate, booklet and video*  
*Energization Exercises taught by Swami Kriyananda*  
*Talks about Discipleship, and about Kriya Yoga*  
*Film of Paramhansa Yogananda*  
*Yogananda chanting, "Songs of my heart"*  
*Music by Kriyananda: Secrets of Love, Secrets of Life, Mystic Harp*

**Promotional Literature**

*Program Guide*  
*What is Ananda*  
*What is Kriya Yoga*  
*Ananda Pilgrimages*  
*Ananda Yoga Academy of Europe*

**Films about Ananda**

*Ananda Europa* (English and Italian narrative)  
*Ananda World Brotherhood Colonies* (English and Italian narrative)  
*The Gift of Inner Peace* (English, Italian and Spanish titles, with music)

You can find these things at: [www.anandaedizioni.it/materiale-didattico/english-products.html](http://www.anandaedizioni.it/materiale-didattico/english-products.html) ,  
[www.ananda.it](http://www.ananda.it), [sangha@ananda.it](mailto:sangha@ananda.it)

## **Inspiration from Paramhansa Yogananda and Swami Kriyananda**

### ***"How to Keep the Church Steadfast"***

Instead of lectures being given in mortgage-laden, costly temples, small groups may be organized in noise-proof rooms in members' homes. Such groups should not spend their time in listening to each other give their ideas and imaginations about God, but they should get together to meditate according to a system of constantly progressive technique, and should contact God and listen to His sermons of peace and wisdom within. Big crowds are held together by the power of dogma or by crowd psychology, but the meditating groups are held by their own Self-realization. If there is no Self-realization to hold groups together, then what is the use of trying to hold them by mere entertainment?

Where humans not only get together in the name of God, but also try to invoke His presence in their Temple of Meditation, they are then blessed by the Presence of God.

Such groups should get away from the soulless crowd psychology and should concentrate upon Soul psychology, allowing only those in group meditations who mean real business with God. Small groups would exclude the necessity of catering to unspiritual people in order to meet the expenses of a big church. Never mind who comes or goes in a group as long as they are sincere.

Meditation groups should be organized not for the glorification of a Cause or its Leader, but with the express and only purpose of knowing God by the power of united concentration and meditation. Group meditation is a castle which protects its new spiritual aspirants as well as the veteran meditators. Meditating together increases the degree of Self-Realization in each member of the group by the law of invisible vibratory exchange of spiritual magnetism.

My Master told me to organize a group when I first took lessons from him. He said: "Milk cannot float on water until it is churned into butter," and he said that I must churn my butter of Self-realization.

-- *Inner Culture* magazine, September 1933

## The Value of Satsang

We affect others by our magnetism. They in return, by their magnetism, affect us. It is vitally important to understand the principles of magnetism, how they can be used for our own and others' benefit, how to benefit from others' magnetism, and how to protect ourselves against harmful magnetism in others.

*Sat-sanga* (good company) is almost as important on the path as meditation itself. Mix more with spiritually minded people. Tune in *consciously* to their vibrations. As you draw from others, so give love and appreciation in return. By thus closing the energy circuit, you will help bring about a mutual increase of magnetism...

*Sat-sanga* is important for another reason also: When spiritually inclined people get together, especially for meditation, they increase the magnetism of everyone involved. Yogananda called this phenomenon "the law of invisible vibratory exchange."

--Awaken to Superconsciousness, Chapter Twelve

\*\*

Inner freedom, and respect for the right to the same freedom for everyone, is the ideal of *ahimsa*. It is also the ideal of true *satsanga*, good company, or right companionship with others. The tales of Indian mythology can never be rightly understood without a grounding in this fundamental attitude.

The reason why religion has never been really organized in that country, and certainly not with the ordered efficiency of the West, is that Indian culture is deeply committed to a sharing in inner freedom, to a commitment based on a dignified understanding that the true spirit of religion springs from inner awakening, not from outer affiliations. At the same time, India has shown the sophistication not to fall into the rational trap of "either . . . or" alternatives. It recognizes the importance of outer stimuli, too, through rituals of various kinds. And it recognizes the value of outer company to inner development. Rituals in themselves have power primarily only to the extent that we *give* them power, whereas other people influence us to the extent that they themselves *give us* energy.

"Environment," Paramhansa Yogananda used to say, "is stronger than will power." By environment he meant, above all, good company. This truth applies universally, at least up to the time when one has developed the inner strength to remain untouched by all outer circumstances.

Just how “good” should one’s company be? Obviously, if it is composed of people as much in need of *satsanga* as oneself, it will be like two people hobbling along on three stilts instead of in the usual manner of each one balancing on his own pair. With three stilts, if either person loses his balance both will tumble down together. The company we seek, then, should not make us partners in misery. We should mix with people from whom we can draw inspiration. In any true relationship, moreover, there should be reciprocity. If we can give something, at least, in return, our relationship will be kept mutually creative and uplifting. For one person to give and the other only to draw, like a sponge soaking up water, results in loss for the one and no lasting benefit for the other...

In the spiritual field even more so, what brings life to it is not lifeless theology nor the pedantry of religious scholars, but the company of people who *live* the spiritual life. It isn’t even competent instruction by people skilled in explaining principles and techniques that brings life to a subject—whatever the subject concerned. Life is breathed into the spiritual search as often as not by someone who may even be illiterate or quite lacking in eloquence. The inspiration may come from someone like an old sadhu I met years ago near Calcutta whose conversation as nearly as I could ever tell was only the blissful utterance, “Guru, guru!” I learned years later that this same sadhu had been sometimes observed levitating.

Inspiration depends not on words and explanations, but on *spiritual presence*.

For each of us individually, inspiration is what we feel *within* ourselves. If another person feels it more strongly within himself, however, that inspiration may be sufficiently magnetic for us to feel it also...

There is a truth that was anciently known in India, but that is only beginning to be recognized in the West owing to the discoveries of modern science. It concerns the magnetic interchange that takes place between human beings. People have known about magnetism for centuries, of course, in a vague way. They’ve cognized it, perhaps, as a feeling of well-being in the company of some people, or perhaps, though undesirably, in emanations from them of moods of depression. Electro-magnetism, a relatively new scientific discovery, is becoming increasingly recognized as affecting even human intercourse.

The stronger a person’s energy, the stronger his magnetic field. People with weak will power have low energy. People with strong will power, conversely, have high energy. “The greater the will,” Paramhansa Yogananda used to say, “the greater the flow of energy.” The greater the flow of energy, again, the stronger the magnetic field it generates. We are constantly affected, far more than most of us realize, by the magnetism that is generated by other people’s thoughts, feelings, and, consequently, the energy they project into the atmosphere around them.

Thus we see that the insistence in the Indian scriptures on the importance of good company is based on far more than a suggestion to surround oneself with good examples. A person who is merely “goody-goody” may set a good example, in the sense at least that he doesn’t misbehave himself, but his goody-goody-ness may be only the consequence of not having the courage to be naughty. We have seen that there is also danger from bad company, and this danger lies not only in the bad example it sets, but in the negative magnetism it generates. For although one person of negative magnetism may not have the power to exert much influence on others, joined to the company of others of similar interest the resulting vibratory exchange will result in stronger magnetism...

Good company, unlike bad company, is never hypnotic. For its influence is not exciting, but calming. In calmness, people never act against their higher principles. The waves of emotion are calmed not by suppressing them, but by *inspiring* stillness in the mind and heart—in the heart especially, for when the heart’s feelings are like a flawless lens, intuition unfolds like a blossom and brings clarity to all one’s perceptions of reality, revealing things as they truly are and not as delusive desires may have painted them...

There are many types of magnetism...Not every person of strong spiritual magnetism has a spirituality compatible with one’s own. It is important to consult your heart’s feelings. Ask yourself what resonates with your own inner being, with your own nature...

Many dream of the hermit’s life as an alternative to worldly company. Solitude, however, is not for the spiritual neophyte. The shadows of too many fears, false hopes, and unfulfilled desires lurk in the subconscious, ready to assume monster shapes and sizes. They can overwhelm him if he doesn’t, at first, dilute their power over him by distracting his mind somewhat by outward activity, and by good company, until he is strong enough in himself to confront those subconscious shadows openly with the blaze of superconscious awareness.

--*The Hindu Way of Awakening*, chapter fifteen

## Chapter Eight: Addendum

### Addendum 1: Famous People Who Meditate

#### ACTORS

Tina Turner survived after a hard divorce by beginning to meditate – as she still does, and in 2009 she still had a most successful world tour, in spite of her age.

Richard Gere not only meditates, but he took a full journey through buddhism. He states “I remember when I was just starting to practice meditation—24 years old, trying to come to grips with my life. I was holed up in my shitty little apartment for months at a time, just doing tai chi and doing my best to do sitting practice. I had a very clear feeling that I’d always been in meditation, that I’d never left meditation. That it was a much more substantial reality than what we normally take to be reality. That was very clear to me even then, but it’s taken me this long in my life to bring it out into the world more, through more time practicing, watching my mind, trying to generate bodhicitta.”

Oprah Winfrey is a major advocate of meditation, she constantly preaches about its benefits and has various programs that help people both learn and get into the habit of meditating on a regular.

Madonna practices meditation religiously, as she devotes herself to it on a daily basis.

Jerry Seinfeld has been practicing meditation for over 40 years. He also credits much of his success to the practice and believes it’s like tapping into a reserve of energy.

Jennifer Anniston: I also do Transcendental Meditation morning and afternoon. It’s so helpful to me, especially in this crazy industry.”

Ellen DeGeneres says it’s the only time that she’s able to have that “stillness.” In other words, it’s her way of staying in the moment, which contributes to her amazing ability to be her authentic self in front of thousands of people.

David Lynch, the world-known film maker, has revealed what tremendous creative benefits he has gained from his 32 years of meditation. He's also doing charity work for inner city school children, to let them learn meditation.

Katy Perry told Rolling Stone that she starts the day with meditation which helps her get into a positive state of mind.

Hugh Jackman is a huge fan of mediation. “In meditation, I can let go of everything. I’m not Hugh Jackman. I’m not a dad. I’m not a husband. I’m just dipping into that powerful source that creates everything. I take a little bath in it.”

Halle Berry says “I meditate and pray all the time. The faith and respect that I have in the power of God in my life is what I’ve used to keep myself grounded, and it has allowed me to move away from the storms that were in my life. I’m still a work in progress, but I know that as long as I stay close to God I’ll be all right.”

## **MUSICIANS**

Sting has been involved with the David Lynch Foundation, which is dedicated to teaching people meditation.

Paul McCartney once said “In moments of madness, meditation has helped me find moments of serenity — and I would like to think that it would help provide young people a quiet haven in a not-so-quiet world.”

Ringo Starr of the Beatles is also a regular exerciser of stilling his mind.

Leonard Cohen has been following Zazen (which literally means seated meditation) Buddhism for nearly three decades. He discusses his experience saying ‘it is a Zen practice to invite you to sit motionless for long hours, with an officer patrolling the meditation hall to strike you with a stick several times on each shoulder if you nod off. If you sit there long enough, you run through all the alternative ways the events in your life could have turned out. After a while, the activity of thinking, that interior chatter, begins to subside from time to time. And what rushes in, in the same way that light rushes into a room when you switch on the light, is another kind of mood that overtakes you.

## **BUSINESS EXECUTIVES**

Steve Jobs loving meditation. “If you just sit and observe, you will see how restless your mind is. If you try to calm it, it only makes it worse, but over time it does calm, and when it does, there’s room to hear more subtle things- that’s when your intuition starts to blossom and you start to see things more clearly and be in the present more. Your mind just slows down, and you see a tremendous expanse in the moment. You see so much more than you could see before.”

Arianna Huffington, Founder of Huffington Post, Arianna offers weekly classes for AOL and Huffington Post employees. She describes her early morning yoga and meditation as two of her “joy triggers.

Rupert Murdoch, Founder of News Corporation

Jeff Weiner, the CEO of LinkedIn, is a regular meditator.

Bill Ford, the chairman of Ford Motors, and grandson of Henry Ford

Marc Benioff – Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Salesforce, “There is no medication better than meditation.”

Rick Goings – Chairman and CEO, Tupperware Brands

Tony Schwartz, the Energy Project CEO has been meditating for over 20 years. He originally started the practice to quiet his busy mind, according to his book *What Really Matters: Searching for Wisdom in America*. Schwartz says that meditating has freed him from migraines and helped him develop patience, and he also advocates mindfulness as a way to improve work performance.

Larry Brilliant, CEO of the Skoll Global Threats Fund and former director of Google, spent two years during his 20s living in a Himalayan ashram and meditating,

Ray Dalio, Founder & Co-CIO, Bridgewater Associates USA, Meditation has given me centeredness and creativity,” said Dalio. “It’s also given me peace and health.”

Robert Stiller, CEO, Green Mountain Coffee Roasters Inc. There is a dedicated meditation room at the Vermont headquarters of Green Mountain Coffee Roasters Inc., and CEO Robert Stiller himself is a devoted practitioner. “If you have a meditation practice, you can be much more effective in a meeting,” he told Bloomberg in 2008. “Meditation helps develop your abilities to focus better and to accomplish your tasks.”

According to IvankaTrump.com, Donald Trump’s daughter, Ivanka Trump meditates twice daily for twenty minutes each session.

## ATHLETES

Athletic greats Joe Namath, Barry Zito and Arthur Ashe have spoken out about the benefits of meditation as a tool for athletic success. And even entire teams have been turning to visualization and mindfulness practices.

Italian soccer team. The success of the team in winning the World Cup rests on many factors including superior physical conditioning, skill training, team tactics, mental preparation and even luck. However the use of the Mind Room in professional soccer reflects the broadening acceptance and application of biofeedback and neurofeedback as an integral part of the training for those who performance must be optimal during times of extreme stress.” –Biofeedback, Vol. 34, Issue 3, Vietta Wilsom, PhD.

Kobe Bryant in an interview to promote a program made by Oprah Winfrey explains how he meditates every day, saying that: meditation helps him clear his mind for the day. Otherwise he feels like he’s chasing the day.

LeBron James. At only 29 years old, basketball player LeBron James already has 4 regular season MVP trophies, 2 NBA final MVP trophies and 2 NBA Championships among dozens of other accolades to his credit. His skill set is certainly beyond recognition, but there is something else to say about LeBron’s generally calm demeanor as he plays the game of basketball -particularly over the past couple of years. It’s as if the naturally fast paced game of basketball occurs in slow motion from his perspective, making him capable of scoring, passing and rebounding with ease amongst the world’s best. LeBron’s most infamous meditation experience occurred during the 2012 NBA Playoffs when he used a timeout to individually refocus.

Michael Jordan. Sports psychologist and meditation teacher George Mumford worked extensively with the Chicago Bulls while Jordan was the team’s star player, helping them to sharpen focus through a regular meditation practice. “When we are in the moment and absorbed with the activity, we play our best.”

Ricky Williams of the Miami Dolphins meditates every day, before each game.

Michigan basketball team coach taught them visualization and meditation techniques that they use throughout the year.

Misty May-Treanor & Kerri Walsh. 3-Time Olympic gold medalists Misty May-Treanor and Kerri Walsh are two of the best in the world to ever play women’s beach volleyball. The duo have dominated competitions at three consecutive summer Olympics and have utilized meditation as a tool in helping them get there. Led by sports psychologist Michael Gervais, the

Olympians regularly practice meditation, yoga and visualization as a regular part of their training regiment.

The Seattle Seahawks, American football team, are all about the mindfulness practices of yoga and meditation sessions.

## **WORLD LEADERS**

### **Meditation In Parliament: Not A One-Time Thing.**

Though this high-profile meditation session seems to be a one-time event, many of the attendees are no stranger to mindfulness. In fact, mindfulness meditation has been a fixture in Parliament for more than a year—so much so that some members joke that it’s becoming a ‘cult’.

More than 95 MPs and parliament staff meet regularly for mindfulness meditation courses taught within parliament, and from the sound of it, the effect these courses have been having are pretty substantial.

At last week’s high profile event, several politicians spoke publicly about how these meditation courses have changed their lives for the better. Lord Andrew Stone, who was assigned to meet with Egypt’s military leadership earlier this year, told the audience that mindfulness meditation helped him be compassionate towards all sides of the country’s deeply troubled political factions. “I didn’t know how to cope,” he explained, “but these practices made a massive difference.”

Tracy Crouch MP also talked about the extraordinary benefits mindfulness meditation has created in her life. In her speech, she spoke openly about her personal struggle with mental illness.

U.S. Congress. Every week, Congressman Tim Ryan hosts the Quiet Time Caucus, an informal 30-minute moment of silence held in the Speaker’s Chapel. Lawmakers can meditate, do a Christian prayer like the centering prayer, or just sit there quietly. “Members of Congress never have a moment to just be quiet, from the moment they get up in the morning when they turn on Morning Joe or whatever, to meetings and votes all day, to the moment they fall asleep, often with the TV on,” Ryan said. Quiet Time started with Ryan by himself, then a couple of colleagues trickled in, and now there are about six or seven.

President Bill Clinton

## **Addendum 2: Guidelines for Leading Guided Meditations**

- A clear and precise intention about the purpose of each guided practice.
- One instruction at a time, leaving space/silence after each instruction to give them time to follow that instruction.
- Instructions that are easy to follow, no possibility to misunderstand the instruction.
- Essential instructions without embellishments ,
- Words that stimulate images; few, simple adjectives that leave room for their interpretation, like “large,” “vast,” “luminous,” “deep.”
- Verbs, that invite, suggest, but do not impose
- Instructions in positive words; don’t suggest what they *should not do*.
- Soft, kind, warm, gentle, clear, audible voice. Imagine that your voice goes upward in an arc and showers down upon and around them.

## **Addendum 3: Prepare the environment**

- Light
- Air/temperature
- Chairs
- Microphones
- Visual aids
- Music
- Incense
- Flowers
- Materials
- Your appearance
- The Masters