

# Guide to **MINDFUL LIVING**

*vet  
candy*



# Vet Candy Media

Dr. Jill Lopez  
**Editor in Chief**

Antonio Lopez  
**Creative Director**

Shannon Gregoire  
**Assistant Editor**

Yagmur Karaman  
**Design Editor**

Amanda Coffin  
**Copy and Research Editor**

Published by  
**Vet Candy Media**

Chief Executive Officer  
**Dr. Jill Lopez**

Vet Candy trademark and logo are owned by  
Vet Candy, LLC  
Copyright ©2022

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in crucial reviews and certain other non-commercial uses permitted by copyright law. **For permission requests write to [hello@myvetcandy.com](mailto:hello@myvetcandy.com).**



# Mindfulness and mindful attitude: a help to follow healthier life habits

Mindfulness and generally having a mindful attitude, based on the awareness of the present moment, would make people more likely to follow health advice and change their lifestyle.

- “150 minutes of physical activity per week reduces the risk of cancer”
- “2,000 calories a day is what an adult person should eat”
- “Stop smoking, live longer”

Follow the advice or ignore it? How people react to health promotion messages.



Every day we come into contact with countless messages and health tips about how to be healthier and how to initiate behavioral changes, such as quitting smoking, exercising more and eating well, all equally well intentioned and scientifically proven.

For some people, however, this type of message, rather than encouraging them to live their lives in a healthier way, only calls for defensive reactions and resentments, such as: “stop being so nagging and leave me alone!”

Messages so relevant on a personal level, such as advice on how to improve one’s health, could be seen by some as extremely

threatening, as they are read as a threat to one’s sense of mastery and competence.

This reaction, linked to the experience of concomitant negative emotions, including the sense of guilt, would then lead to counterproductive effects on the receptivity to these messages and therefore also the results of the same, thus failing in an attempt to entice people to improve the own lifestyle.

Why for some people health tips motivate us to improve by stopping health-damaging behaviors, while for others they have the opposite effect? Can research help improve this type of message so that it becomes effective for everyone?





# Taking care of your mind with meditation

First thing first: What meditation is really about? Despite all its popularity, few truly know what meditation is. Some believe that meditation is mentally concentrating on something, others think that meditating is to imagine something that gives peace and serenity.

In reality, meditation is a state of profound peace that is achieved when the mind settles down while remaining completely alert.

Exercises, poses and breath control, do not really correspond to a meditation, but are just methods to rebalance one's posture and control some vital functions. In the long run,

their practice, without a real goal of spiritual realization, can lead to the imbalance of the right channel (the solar channel) of our energy system, because they constantly push us to concentrate on the technique.

As I said, meditation is a state of mindless awareness: one does not do meditation, one is





in meditation. You can stay in meditation also expressing your joy in a creative activity rather than remaining still in the lotus pose on the top of a mountain. True meditation leads to a state of deep peace, in which the mind is calm and silent but alert. This state of thoughtless awareness cannot be attained through mental effort; thus, in fact, we would use the mind to stop the mind itself!

On the other hand, the state of thoughtless awareness is realized when a state of general well-being is created within us that calms all our moods and tensions. To allow this process of reassuring to happen spontaneously and simply, it is an energy that resides in us, in our sacred bone. Once activated, it calms and balances all our energetic system.

# WHY MEDITATION?



Here are 5 reasons why you should incorporate meditation into your life as soon as possible.

## You become more aware

Awareness is a quality that usually those who do not meditate do not know at all but, in my opinion, it is among the most important to live a peaceful life. This can be considered as

a real muscle. If we do not train it, it is easy not to clearly see what happens in our head and consequently many common problems can arise. On the other hand, if the muscle of consciousness is trained by a constant meditative practice, we can be more aware of our thoughts, of our body and of our life in general. Awareness allows us to behave differently in many circumstances.

## You are no longer in the grip of emotions

Emotions are a problem that should not be underestimated because they greatly affect our lives. Sometimes they are completely repressed and we carry them in for a long time, while others let them go out and we are excessively controlled. The practice of meditation, on the other hand, allows us to see what is happening inside us and to let emotions go out freely but at the same time not be controlled. This fact greatly affects our psychophysical wellbeing and improves our life.

## Stress disappears

Stress is one of the most widespread problems in recent years and creates many problems for our lives. Thanks to meditation we can take a step back in our minds and see that we are usually ourselves “self-identifying” and that often the causes that cause this problem to arise are not real. It is our mind that is agitated, thinks excessively of the past and the future, magnifies even small problems, always wants something more and is never satisfied. As



soon as you look internally, all this becomes clearer. Thanks to meditation instead we can calm the mind, stand on the present, see the problems for what they really are and we can learn the art of being satisfied.

## From unconscious reactions to meditated actions

Many decisions we make in our lives can be considered as unconscious reactions. This is because we tend to react unconsciously to whatever happens to us. If we like something we are attracted to it, if we do not like it, we try to avoid it. But not always what we like is positive and what we do not like is negative and we should think twice before doing anything. Meditation allows us to do so and in life we will no longer be prey to our own reactions.

## Improve concentration

In an era dominated by apps, social media and the internet, where every excuse is good to lose focus on what you are doing, it is essential to develop this quality. Concentration and meditation go hand in hand because if we are not

concentrated we cannot meditate. Thanks to meditation we can practice concentration every day and with the passage of time we will be able to do anything without being distracted easily and continuously.

We really hope that these 5 benefits of meditation will encourage you to try practicing and above all to establish the habit of practice in your life. Let's see now how to get started.



## How to meditate everyday

So, if you want to embark this amazing explorative journey into guided meditation here you can find some amazing tips to get started in a gentle and proper way.

Create your own zen area is a great starting point!

Use candle, incenses, some cushions and choose a peaceful place where you can easily unplug from your everyday life. Create a safe zen area where you can be yourself, with no masks, you and your true self.

- First of all, the first thing you need to do is sit comfortably, but you have to find a position where your back is straight or it's not good. If you can stay comfortable you can sit on the ground, maybe you can help with a meditation cushion, otherwise even a chair is fine, but remember that the back must be upright, it is very important. Initially it will take you some time to find the perfect location for you. An excellent exercise to find your equilibrium point is to move the weight slightly forward, then backwards, then to the right and finally to the left. Do it for a few times, until you find what is called "your center"







- Once the back is stabilized, it is time to stabilize the neck. Repeat the same previous exercise by bending the neck forward, backwards, to the right and finally to the left. Also try to push the neck slightly upwards. Remember that the correct position is fundamental for meditative practice.
- The mouth should instead be closed, but not tightened and the tongue should be placed gently on the palate.
- Now it's time to close your eyes. These must be closed gently and not tightened, same as the mouth. Also try to look inward. This statement is not always understood and it takes a bit of practice to understand what it really means. But do not worry, you'll learn it over time.
- At this point focus on the breath. Let it be soft. Do not force it, just watch it. I am sure that after a few minutes you will understand that, even if it seems a trivial thing, it is not at all. When the mind starts to digress, just watch your thoughts as if you were an observer and try to bring your attention back to your breathing.
- It is at this point that your meditative journey begins..

It is often thought that meditating is something complex, which takes a long time, which can only be done in some very silent or particularly spiritual places, a path that can only be undertaken with the presence

and under the guidance of an expert teacher. Being accompanied by those who have more experience can certainly help in the experience of meditation, teach the techniques best suited to various types of people, encourage them to take the right time to take the right steps ... but we assure you that the foundations of meditation are not that complicated and can be followed by anyone, at any time of day, even every day.

## *Being persistent and committed*

The commitments of everyday life, the fear of not being able to make it, the laziness (especially on cold winter days) can be our enemies, leading us to believe that we do not have enough physical and mental time to learn to meditate.

But if instead I told you that it takes only 5 minutes a day, would you still tell me that you do not have time to meditate?

Yes, we can learn to get used to a meditative attitude, to be more aware of what we do, to bring our attention to the here and now, only and exclusively to what we are doing at a specific moment.

And then follow these simple steps:

- take only 2-3 minutes;
- choose a time of day (in the morning, before starting the day, but also when you feel particularly stressed);

- sit in a comfortable position (cross-legged, on a cushion, with your back against a wall, on a chair or a bench);
- close your eyes;
- bring your breathing to your attention, to the air that comes out and enters your nostrils
- with each inhalation follow the flow of the air that runs through the nose, go down into the throat and get into your lungs, filling them with fresh air;
- at each exhalation, feel the air coming out of the body and expanding around you, in all directions
- Follow these simple steps and whenever your mind wanders to other thoughts, bring them back to the flow of air to the present moment.
- Do it for 5 minutes, every day and .... you will have meditated!



And if you do not even have those 5 minutes of quiet (... but are you really sure about it!?) you can still learn to bring your attention to the here and now, what you are doing, while walking, while walking the broom on the ground or wash dishes while you drink a cup of tea.

Meditation is awareness of the present moment, it is bringing your mind to focus on what you are doing and only on that.



# Taking care of your body with some stress-relief activities

The physical activity practiced through so-called relaxing sports helps to keep both the body and the mind healthy and in perfect balance.

Stress is always around the corner, for those who study, for those who work and for anyone who finds themselves living and enduring the frenetic and chaotic rhythms of today's society.

Fighting the enemy number one of psycho-physical well-being is possible, just as it is possible to defeat and keep him away from us; the benefits of sport on body and mind health are now scientifically proven.

The data emerging from some research shows the beneficial effects of physical activity on the symptoms of anxiety and depression.

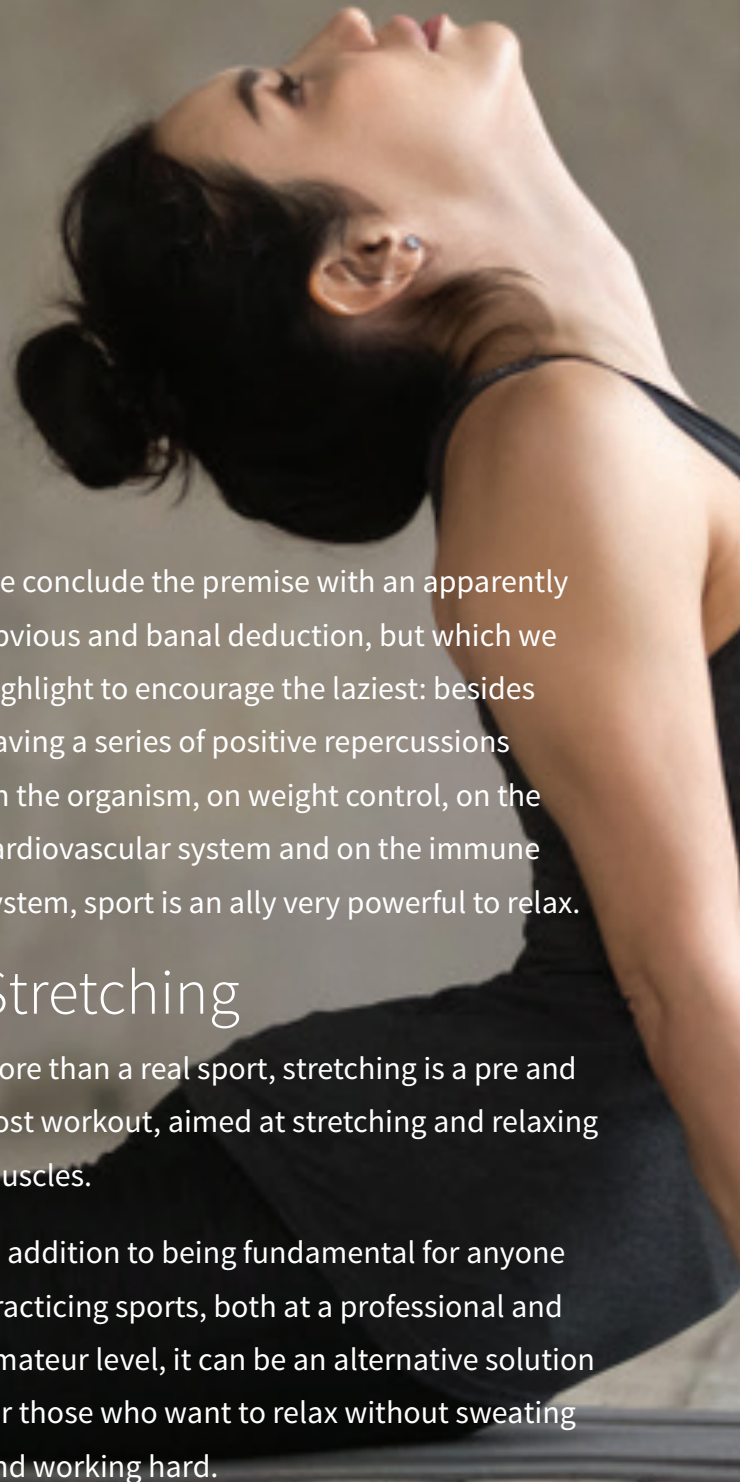
Some disciplines are particularly effective thanks to the ability to produce endorphins, the wellness molecules that combat stress hormone, cortisol.

We conclude the premise with an apparently obvious and banal deduction, but which we highlight to encourage the laziest: besides having a series of positive repercussions on the organism, on weight control, on the cardiovascular system and on the immune system, sport is an ally very powerful to relax.

## Stretching

More than a real sport, stretching is a pre and post workout, aimed at stretching and relaxing muscles.

In addition to being fundamental for anyone practicing sports, both at a professional and amateur level, it can be an alternative solution for those who want to relax without sweating and working hard.







The advice is to transform stretching into a daily habit, to be practiced especially in those moments of the day when physical tension is felt.

Benefits include greater flexibility / elasticity of the muscles and a general improvement in the ability to move.

Stretching loosens contractures, eliminates muscular / articular tensions, calms the mind and consequently facilitates stress management.



## Outdoor sports

It is well known that sports activities in contact with nature amplify the benefits on body and mind.

Trees, flowers, rivers, sand and the sea are natural elements that contribute to reducing anxiety. In addition, the sun has beneficial effects on mood through the production of serotonin, the happiness hormone.

### *Race*

Let's start with a great classic, the race, which practiced in a park or near the sea allows you to eliminate stress and tension more quickly.

The runner who chooses as the context in which to run the pine forest or the beach moves away from the city chaos, notoriously synonymous with traffic and frenetic pace.

### *Fast walk*

For those who do not like running we suggest a brisk walk.

What is identified as fast walking, if performed regularly and with the correct posture, brings benefits at various levels, both physical and mental.

### *Bicycle*

As well as running and fast walking, even cycling, as an outdoor sport, if practiced in the green, ensures better oxygenation. This clearly contributes to relieving stress and achieving a pleasant feeling of relaxation.



## Indoor sports

Notwithstanding that any type of physical activity, aerobic or not, can be carried out both outdoors and within gyms and sports centers, there are some disciplines that are commonly practiced in covered facilities.

### Aquagym

Among the relaxing sports that include an indoor location is also the aqua gym.

The opposite resistance from water to movement involves intense physical work, both cardiovascular and muscular.

Water allows the muscles to relax and at the same time release tension.

### Pilates

In this section we will explain how to relax the muscles, and consequently how to release tension and stress, through the practice of pilates.

We are in the field of holistic disciplines, which notoriously tend to achieve a balance between body and mind.

The method is based on some guiding principles from Eastern disciplines, such as awareness, concentration and breathing.

Pivotal points around which the pilates exercises rotate, the relaxation of the muscles and the maintenance of the correct posture.

The benefits are identifiable, even from the first training sessions, in an improvement in the ability to control oneself, both physically and mentally.

Pilates relieves stress and tension; at the same time it keeps the mind awake, active and receptive.

On a physical level it favors the elasticity of the spine and in general of all the joints; improves control and fluidity of movements.





For those who are not particularly experienced and approach for the first time the practice of the activity, the advice is to start with a course and with exercises carried out under the

supervision of a professional; it is important to perform the movements correctly in order to avoid the risk of physical damage.



## Yoga

In this section we will talk about yoga, a thousand-year-old Indian discipline that is also important in our country.

We have chosen to analyze this particular practice simply because, over the last few decades, it has been so successful that it has become almost a “fashion”; in fact there is to say that all the meditative activities, which combine physical and mental work, have beneficial effects on the reduction of stress, anxiety and nervous states.

Yoga is based on breathing and the accuracy of positions and exercises.

There are numerous beneficial effects, both physically and mentally; let's find out some.

As for the body, the discipline allows to improve the posture and to acquire more

elasticity and mobility; it tones the muscles, increases the flexibility of joints and muscles, relieves back and neck pain, facilitates digestion and weight loss.

### **A regular practice:**

- improves the functioning of the cardiovascular system, as it lowers the heart rate and blood pressure;
- improves the respiratory system and the functioning of the lungs through slow and deep breathing;
- strengthens the immune system through the stimulation of the parasympathetic system.

On the psychic level yoga is considered a powerful rebalancer with important antidepressant potential.

In general, through constant practice it is concretely possible to combat, reduce and eliminate stress and anxiety.

Meditation promotes relaxation by lowering cortisol levels, heart rate and blood pressure.

A further benefit, which can be particularly useful for those who, like the student, need to

stay concentrated for hours, can be identified in the increase in concentration and in the development of the ability to focus thought.

Before concluding the paragraph a council to increase the effectiveness of the discipline.

Unless you have chosen to attend a course, carefully choose the environment in which to practice your daily yoga session; whether external or internal, try to identify a location in which you feel peaceful and that does not present elements of distraction.

---

## Some tips to embrace an active lifestyle



Consistency is an important detail in any type of physical activity. Here is the reason why you have to avoid the sports that bore you and identify one that instead stimulates and amuses you.

Since we are talking about physical activity with a view to relaxation it is equally essential that you choose a sport in which competition is not envisaged.

To increase the relaxing power of some physical activities we recommend a suitable background music, which will help you to disconnect the connection from everything that surrounds you and from the thoughts that crowd the mind every day.

Now that you know how to alleviate anxiety while keeping your body in shape, all you have to do is choose the discipline that suits you best and start planning your daily routine by including a physical activity session.



# Taking care of your soul with some mindful daily actions

*Do you feel tired, stressed and without a specific goal in life? Sometimes it happens to go through very heavy periods in which the light at the end of the tunnel never seems to appear. These are the moments in which we must learn to love ourselves and dedicate ourselves time.*

There are really many activities that can help us feel better. We can choose to put our favorites into practice and those that suit us best. For example, here is the idea of learning to prepare bread at home or to cultivate a vegetable garden. Here are some activities that could make you relax and have fun and then better face life.

## *Grow vegetables*

Cultivating the vegetable garden and caring for the plants is a bit like treating yourself. And then, if we have the possibility of cultivating a vegetable garden, even a small one, let's not pull back. Contact with nature relaxes our mind and helps us feel better when we are stressed.

Cultivating the vegetable garden is so beneficial that horticulture therapy has now also been introduced in some hospitals, all around the world. And if you have the opportunity to grow aromatic plants in the office, you will get benefits in terms of productivity at work and concentration.





## *Knit*

Do you know how to knit? If you have not yet learned how to knit and feel stressed, perhaps the time has come to give a chance to knitting, crochet and balls of yarn. Knitting allows you to enjoy a moment of peace and tranquility. This is how a few minutes of work allow you to find a real relaxation. In short, knitting is an effective anti-stress. It is not just an activity for women, in fact in the world more and more men choose it to relax.



## *Hug a tree*

Hugging a tree to regain health and well-being is the advice of silvotherapy. If during a walk in the green we meet a tree that attracts us in a particular way for its beauty or for its grandeur, let's try to embrace it and let ourselves be regenerated by its energy. When we embrace a tree our mind relaxes and our body regains contact with the earth and natural elements



## *Give a kiss or a hug*

Give a kiss or a hug to the people we love. We may not do it often enough and forget that kisses and hugs given and received have beneficial effects both on us and on others. Then it's time to review what are the positive effects of a hug and the benefits of a kiss. Having calm and deep relationships with others can be the best cure.



## *Smell a flower*

If you are tired, stressed and in a bad mood, you can find immediate relief in a very simple way. Smell a flower. It is recommended by aromatherapy and this is confirmed by studies on the psycho-physiological effects of some natural aromas, useful above all in donating a situation of relaxation. Once again, it is contact with nature - which we risk losing while living in the city - that makes us feel better.

## *Listen to relaxing music*

Music has great power over us. Listening to a song can help us relax or recharge. Music really has the ability to make us feel better and music therapy knows it well. The positive sounds and vibrations of music are a real stress reliever. Choose a quiet and relaxing soundtrack, perhaps rich in the sounds of nature, or classical music. In fact it seems that classical music, and in particular classical Indian music, is a real cure for our well-being.



## *Take hot baths*

Water relaxes and facilitates the elimination of waste, puts us in contact with the fluids that we have internally and brings us back to a non-rigid state, very similar to that of internal body systems.

You can use bath salts if you have a bathtub, you can use the shower jet either hot or cold, without changing too quickly and drastically, a bit like a real hydrotherapy session on your own.



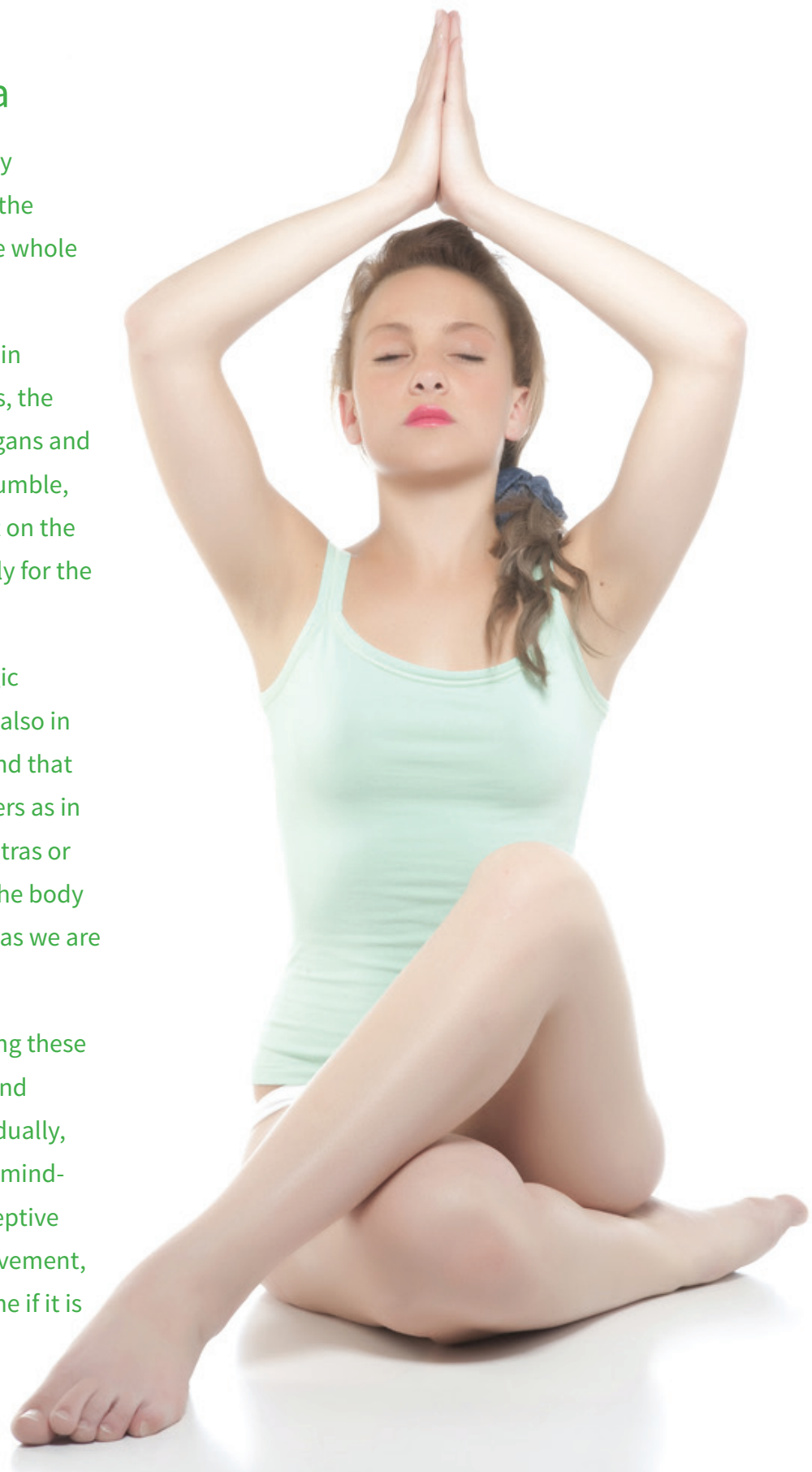
## Qi gong and mantra

The qi gong is the Chinese energy gymnastics and is very good for the internal energy circulation of the whole body.

These are slow movements but, in addition to working on the joints, the benefit comes to the internal organs and the mind, which remains free, humble, concentrated, while the feet rest on the ground and the head looks lightly for the sky.

The same is also true for the yogic practices that involve the voice (also in the qi gong the sound is used) and that resonate on certain energy centers as in the case of the recitation of mantras or Vedic chants; the well-being of the body is also achieved through sound, as we are vibration.

It is not a question of approaching these disciplines in a totalizing and blind way, but of using the effects gradually, progressively. Consider that the mind-body system is immediately receptive when it comes to sound and movement, but relaxation can take some time if it is not sought for a long time.





# Create some mindful healthy habits to rock your day

Morning stress and anxiety ruin us all day: let's try to do some small things the night before, in order to promote relaxation, sleep well and, therefore, wake up with the serenity and positivity that allow us to face the day that begins.

Morning stress, 7 things to do before going to sleep

## 1. Encourage peaceful sleeping

Don't let there be any pending tasks that you'll find yourself the next morning, so do the dishes, set up the house, carry on with the deadlines. Similarly, try not to go to bed with the regret of having quarreled with someone without making peace.

## 2. Close the accounts with the day

So, close with the day, eventually summarize it in a diary and don't make recriminations. In

this sense, let us be inspired by a sentence by Roald Dahl: "As the night goes dark, let your worries vanish. Sleep peacefully knowing that you have done all you can do for today."

## 3. Think positive

Never get caught up in negative thoughts at the end of the day. On the contrary, try to think positive, even to combine relaxation and wake up without anxiety and stress. Therefore, identify one or more reasons to be grateful (you can also write them). And, as Enid Bagnold says, "before falling asleep every day, say something positive to yourself".



#### 4. Sleeping right

Try to go to bed at an hour that allows you to rest the right. In this way, you can wake up earlier, to enjoy the sunrise, experience the pleasant sensation of having more time, reduce morning anxiety, start the day calmly and without stress.

#### 5. Eliminate bad habits

To cope with morning stress, sleep quality is essential. To favor it, limit some evening habits. What are they? Read here to know them.

#### 6. Think about the next day

Morning stress can also arise when we start thinking about what we have to do and we don't know where to start, or it can come from having to do everything in a hurry. Therefore, plan the day from the night before, organize the times, think about what to cook, prepare the clothes, prepare the bag.

#### 7. Find your own evening routine

Prepare yourself for restful sleep, then build your evening relaxation routine: you can dedicate yourself to beauty care, read a few pages of a book, have a foot massage, reread or repeat phrases and poems dedicated to the night

## WRITE A STRESS JOURNAL

Did you know that there are tools you can easily use, they cost very little and can help you fight stress?

The Stress Diary is one of these tools!

This is a technique that simply uses pen and paper and will help you:

- Better understand what happens to you when you're under stress;
- Understand your thoughts and emotions more deeply;
- Develop strategies to combat stress

### *What is the Stress Diary?*

The Stress Diary, as the name implies, is a diary that helps the person who uses it to gain awareness of the thoughts and emotions that live when it is under stress.

It is a technique that can be applied by anyone at any time: just have a notebook and a pen!

### *How does the Stress Diary work?*

To write the Stress Diary, the person must briefly describe the stressful situation that upset her by noting the day and time.

Any situation experienced as stressful can be noted on the Stress Diary: indeed, this practice is very encouraged!



In fact, by reporting more possible situations on the diary, the person acquires the ability to see the points in common between all these situations.

They increase their knowledge of common points, it is possible to improve the ability to fight stress by finding positive alternatives to thoughts or behaviors that generate stress.

After briefly describing the situation, note the feelings that have been tried in that specific situation.

This helps to give a name to the emotions and stimulates the process of self-awareness even more.

If we do not know how to give a specific name to the emotion we felt at that specific moment, we can try to describe it by drawing on the physical sensations experienced: being in contact with the belly, our emotional center, helps a lot in describing emotions!

After describing the feelings, the person goes on to write the Thoughts that Disturb.

The Thoughts that Disturb are all those thoughts that people turn to themselves when they are under stress: have you ever noticed your thoughts in those situations?

Try to listen to yourself and make this behavior a habit: you will realize that there may be some devaluing thoughts towards yourself or others that you did not even have awareness of!

This process helps the person to get out of the automatic mental patterns and gain knowledge of their cognitive patterns.

The next part is dedicated to Positive Answers.

In every problematic situation there are aspects that we have generalized, that we have not considered or that we have considered in a much worse and more catastrophic way than they really are.

When we are faced with a problem it may be useful to ask questions similar to these:

- Do I really know all the facts?
- Is there a better way to consider the situation?
- What would a dear friend say in this situation?





Even thinking about a person we are fond of or who we think is good at dealing with similar situations can be useful: what we need is a different perspective from which to observe the stressful situation!

Stay as close to reality as possible by letting yourself be influenced as little as possible by thoughts and feelings, and you will see that acquiring a new perspective will become easier and easier with time.

Finally, the last thing to do is to write the Action Plan, or what we will actually do to deal with the stressful situation.

Let us remember that in the first place it can be very useful to calm down and reason with a cool mind, so it can be extremely indicated to do a relaxation exercise.

Then we can use all the information we have collected so far to change the way we approach the problem and therefore increase the chances of solving it.

The compilation of the Stress Diary is as follows:

- Briefly describe the situation that stressed and / or upset me (with date and time)
- Write the feelings I felt at that moment
- Write the thoughts that I thought at that moment
- Try to see the problem from a different perspective by elaborating Positive Answers to the problem
- Choose and write ways to deal with the stressful situation in the Action Plan

If at first you find it difficult, don't be discouraged! Becoming aware of the emotions and thoughts we experience in a stressful situation is a big step forward in itself and considerably improves our ability to fight stress.

Moreover, the more we use the Stress Diary, the more we will become good at using it: this means that what seemed difficult to us will become easier and we will find our alternatives to problems by ourselves.

## Summary

Stress seems to have become the word that best describes the lifestyle of most people, accompanying them daily and making their days increasingly difficult to deal with. The sources of stress are innumerable, but the most common are certainly work, money, hectic pace and family management issues.

Some argue that a “right” level of stress is healthy, but in fact, when it reaches worrying levels, it does nothing but make life unhappy and unhealthy and you have to run for cover as soon as possible.

If eliminating stress altogether is in fact unlikely, reducing it and learning to live more serenely is however possible, perhaps following some simple but effective advice.

The basic idea is to tackle the path of eliminating stress gradually, without setting time limits and savoring the small successes we can achieve. Thinking of eliminating all the bad habits that pollute our life in one go is impossible and would create additional stress, when we set ourselves too big a goal for our reach. Better to face all the good intentions step by step, without any hurry.

Learning to recognize the problem is the first step. Understanding and recognizing that you are stressed is the launching pad to try to solve the problem or at least reduce it. Often too much time is spent denying stress, which only causes more stress and problems. So, take action, acknowledge you need a change and embrace a brand new mindful approach towards your job and your whole life.





# Do you know the latest?

