



Peace is just a few breaths away.

By Kathy Morley C.Ht.

What if you found out there was a way to dissolve years off your age, lower your blood pressure, promote clear thinking, enhance your immune system and experience moments of peace. Would you be open to do it?

Even more exciting, you may be able to preserve or even lengthen your telomeres which are protective caps at the ends of each chromosome. Telomeres become shorter as we age; shorter telomeres are associated with many age-related diseases. Studies have shown that people who have longer telomeres have less generative disease or some of the signs of aging for a longer period of time.

Sounds wonderful but now you may be thinking something that can do all that must be quite difficult, expensive or both. However if you read my article in the April 2014 Inner Realm Magazine you would know the answer: meditation and mindfulness.

Regarding meditation, Dr. Herbert Benson was a pioneer in the field of mind-body medicine. Dr. Benson believed that "many people are not equipped with good coping strategies for dealing with stress. Possibly 5 billion doses of tranquilizers are prescribed every year and that the result of stress in industry alone is approximately \$300 billion." Forty years ago he began to study stress and its effects on the body and mind.

Knowing that stress was a response to certain stimuli, he had people alternatively meditate and think normally while measuring their metabolism and carbon dioxide elimination, breathing and brain waves. Dr. Benson found dramatic physiological changes when they changed their thoughts. During meditation their metabolism and carbon dioxide elimination decreased as well as the brain waves changed to theta which signifies deep relaxation. He named the mind-body effect the "relaxation response." Dr. Benson felt the relaxation response was an effective tool for stress related disorders such as anger, anxiety, insomnia, high blood pressure and IBS.

In 1979 Jon Kabat-Zinn, a molecular biologist who was also a longtime meditator, founded the mindfulness-based stress reduction program (MBSR). Mindfulness brings full attention to the body and mind in the present moment without trying to change the experience. You are just observing, not giving any judgment, criticism or blame. With practice one can begin to discover the inner workings of their own mind as well as the causes of their own suffering. It is a form of silent witnessing which I found to be extremely powerful.

Many clinical institutions use MBSR to teach mindfulness meditation as a healing tool. MBSR has been helpful for people with chronic pain and stress-related disorders, stress and the immune system and how the brain processes emotions.

MBSR has applications in academia too. Tara Hornich-Lisciandro, an educator from the Matawan Regional School District, was concerned about her students' anxiety when taking advanced placement exams. Some of them were so worried they were not eating properly or getting enough sleep. She had heard about the benefits of MBSR in schools and decided to attend a Mindfulness in Education Workshop. After applying mindfulness techniques in her class she noticed her students seemed to calm down and generate better work. It was so successful she introduced mindfulness activities at her daughter's preschool and eventually her kindergarten class.

Here's a simple exercise I use to help relax the body and mind. Sit erect in a chair with your feet firmly planted on the ground your hands resting on your upper legs or gently clasped together. Now close your eyes, take a deep breath in through your nostrils and release the breath through your mouth three times. While doing the breathing exercise be aware of the breath on the tip of your nose and how it feels as it goes up the nose down the back of the throat all the way down to the lungs and down to the diaphragm. You'll notice that automatically after the deep breath the breath will automatically release. Again, take another deep breath and notice the sensation of the breath coming back up and releasing the breath through the mouth. After the third deep breath resume normal breathing and just observe your thoughts without judgment or comment. See where your mind goes, listen to your thoughts without reaction and be open to whatever comes to mind. You may be surprised at the results.

Day by day with focus and attention, these practices become easier and more beneficial to the health of body and mind. There is much to gain and nothing to lose. My motto is, "Peace is just a few breaths away."

Kathy Morley C.Ht., Intuitive, Reiki Master, teacher. Kathy works with energy to help clients identify and clear blocks to healing. She teaches meditation in a way that is easy to learn and holds a monthly meditation class. For more information, call Kathy at 914-646-0111.