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Ageless body timeless mind book

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The French philosopher Michel de Montaigne is quoted as having once said ‘The greatest thing in the world is to know how to belong to oneself.’ Never is this truer in our current, fast-paced society. With so many demands on our time and minds, it takes conscious effort to take a moment and allow ourselves the time we need to explore who we truly are. Even when we do make time, many people are stuck on how to actually do this. The practice of meditation has certainly been recognized as a key method that can help. The word meditation stems from meditatum, a Latin term that means ‘to ponder.’ Through the practice of meditation, we can seek to find a better connection with our body in the everyday moments that we often let pass us by, and create stronger awareness for how our emotions influence our behavior (West, 2016). You may already have a meditation practice that works for you, or you may be new to the concept and looking to build your knowledge and understanding of how meditation can bring value to your daily life. Either way, the history of meditation is fascinating and well worth exploring. Before you read on, we thought you might like to download our 3 Mindfulness Exercises for free. These science-based, comprehensive exercises will not only help you cultivate a sense of inner peace throughout your daily life but will also give you the tools to enhance the mindfulness of your clients, students or employees. You can download the free PDF here. How Old is Meditation? The answer to that question is more complex than you might think. Different research, books, and schools of meditation refer to the ‘age-old tradition’, but as to how long meditation has been around as practice really depends on your definition of the concept. Davanger (2008) reviewed a cross-section of research looking at meditation and speculated that the practice might be as old as humanity itself with the potential meditative capacities of Neanderthals. There are more schools of thought that have placed the origin of meditation within a structured set of practices and techniques based on artifacts and references in Eastern countries. Below are the main two, and how far they date back. India - In some of the oldest written records from around 1500 BCE in India, the practice of Dhyāna or Jhāna is referenced as the training of the mind, often translated as meditation. Many of these records come from the Hindu traditions of Vedantism and discuss the various meditation practices across ancient India. Buddhist Indian Scriptures and texts dating back to only a few hundred BC are even earlier recordings of the practice, but many argue that these are somewhat ambiguous in their references directly to meditation. China - Early forms of meditation are referenced as far back as the 3rd and 6th century BC and linked to the Daoist, Laozi, an ancient Chinese philosopher, and his writings. In this work, many of the terms used in later centuries to describe meditation techniques are used, including Shou Zhong – roughly translated as ‘guarding the middle’ Bao Yi - roughly translated as ‘embracing the one’ Shou Jing – roughly translated as ‘guarding tranquility’ Bao Pu - roughly translated as ‘embracing simplicity’ However, some argue that it is difficult to tell if these were already widely used techniques when the text was written, or if they were newly created terms for the text. Other writings from the early centuries that describe meditative practices include the Zhuangzi from the late Warring States period, roughly 476-221 BC, and the Neiye from the 4th century BC. The truth is, no one knows for absolute certain when meditation officially started. There are multiple references across different cultures and religions - including Judaism, Islam, and Christianity - to meditative-like practices, which all seem to have contributed to and inform the practice known widely today. Where Did Meditation Originate? Much like pinning down how long meditation has been around for, pinpointing where exactly it originates is equally tricky. The earliest written records come from Hindu traditions, in India, of Vedantism from around 1500 BCE. Vedantism is a school of philosophy and is one of the earliest known Indian paths for spiritual enlightenment. Other forms of meditation are then cited around the 6th and 5th centuries BCE within Taoist China and Buddhist India. The precise origins are heavily debated, especially around Buddhist meditation (Wynne, 2007). Some early written accounts of the different states of meditation in Buddhism in India can be found in the sutras of the Pāli Canon, which dates back to the 1st century BCE. The Pāli Canon is a collection of scriptures from the Theravada Buddhist tradition. Some evidence has also connected meditative practices with Judaism, thought to be inherited from its earlier traditions. The Torah (the first five books of the Tanakh, the Hebrew Bible) contains a description of the patriarch Isaac going to ‘Jasach’ in a field. This term is generally understood as being some form of meditation (Kaplan, 1985). Do We Know Who Created/Invented Meditation? In a nutshell, no we don’t. Because the where and when are quite hazy, discovering the who is equally ambiguous. Some of what we do know, however, indicates a few core people who have been instrumental in spreading the practice of meditation. Below I’ve outlined three of the key people, but there are many others who were equally prominent in sharing and spreading the practice of meditation. The Buddha (India) The Buddha, known by other names including Siddhārtha Gautama in Sanskrit or Siddhattha Gotama in Pali, was a prince who became a monk, sage, philosopher and religious leader. It is his teachings on which Buddhism was founded. Because of this, it might be easy to assume that the Buddha created or invented meditation but this is not true. Buddhism texts refer to many different practices of meditation and the Buddha sought out other enlightened teachers to learn the practice and ways of self-fulfillment from. Although he was instrumental in spreading the value of meditation as a practice, the Buddha himself did not invent it. Lao-Tze (China) Lao-Tze, also known by Lao-Tzu and Laozi, was an ancient Chinese philosopher whose name is essentially an honor title meaning ‘Old Teacher’ or ‘Old Master’. He is credited as the author of the Tao-te-Ching, a work of text that exemplifies his thoughts and teachings that founded the philosophical system of Taoism, which references meditative practices and the idea of wisdom in silence. There is much speculation as to whether Lao-Tze actually existed as a single man, or whether the name refers to a collection of individuals and philosophers who shared the same ideas. Doshō (Japan) Doshō was a Japanese monk who, in the 7th century, traveled to China and studied Buddhism under Hsuan Tsang, a great master at the time. It was during this journey that Doshō learned all about the process of Zen, which he then returned to Japan with. When he returned, he opened his first meditation hall dedicated to the practice of Zazen, a sitting meditation. He created a community of monks and students with a primary focus on teaching this form of meditation in Japan. A Look at the Origin and Roots of Meditation Although meditation as a practice today is pretty common and widespread, it’s good to understand that the origins and roots of meditation go back a long way. Today, meditation has been and continues to be adapted to suit our lives and going back to its roots can help you to develop a strong appreciation for how broad the practice is, as well as how it developed across different countries at different points in time. Below I’ve given a brief writeup of these origins and roots: India, Vedantism, and Yogis The oldest documented images of meditation are from India and date back to 5000 to 3500 BCE. Wall art paintings depict people sitting in meditative-like seated postures with their eyes half closed, presumed to be deep in meditation. The oldest documented text of meditation is also from India, from the Hindu traditions of Vedantism, from around 1500 BCE. Although the Vedas created texts describing meditative practices it’s important to know that these had previously been passed down orally through storytelling practices for centuries. Alongside the Vedic practice, Hindu traditions also describe the Yogī practice of meditating in caves. It is believed that many modern practices of meditation stem from this lineage, including the modern yoga movement whose techniques are predominantly based on the Hatha Yoga practice. Although it’s good to understand that the origin of these techniques is based in meditation for spiritual development, not the common practice of stretches and movement many Western schools teach today. Buddhism in India Meditation is often most closely attached to Buddhism, even though the image of the Buddha meditating on a lotus didn’t come until much later, a long time after Buddhism itself began. In the classical language of Buddhism, meditation is referred to as bhāvanā, meaning mental development, or dhyaṇa, meaning a mental calmness. The various techniques and practices for meditation are many. Around the same time that Buddhism was growing, three other practices were also developing, each with their own way of approaching meditation. Although these are not as popular globally as Buddhism, they’re worth knowing about. Mahāvira and Jainism in India - Tirthankara Mahāvira, also known as Vardhamāna, is credited with reviving Jainism. Tirthankara means ‘Ford Maker’ and the word indicates a founder of a ‘tirtha’ - a passage across the sea of births and deaths. Mahāvira was the twenty-fourth Tirthankara. He put forward the spiritual, and ethical teachings of the Tirthankaras from the pre-Vedic era that led to the revival of Jainism in India. As a practice, Jainism places a strong emphasis on self-discipline and non-violence. The meditative techniques in Jainism specifically focus on mantras, visualizations, and breathing. Lao Tze and Taoism in China - Although there is some dispute over whether Lao Tze existed as a single person, or whether the title refers to a collective of individuals if he did exist it is thought this would have been around the 6th century BCE. Taoism places an emphasis on becoming one with ‘Tao’, meaning ‘cosmic life’ or nature. Traditional Taoist meditation techniques include a focus on mindfulness, contemplation and using visualization. Confucius and Confucianism in China - Confucius was a Chinese teacher, politician, and philosopher, who existed in the 6th century BCE. His teachings and thoughts were expressed through the philosophy now known as Confucianism and are still quite prominent in China today. Confucianism places an emphasis on personal growth, morality, and social justice. Meditation in Confucianism is known as Jing Zuo, and has a focus on self-improvement and contemplation. Sufism and Meditation Practice Sufism is an ancient Islamic tradition that dates back as far as 1400 years. It is a practice in which Muslims seek to connect with Allah (God) through self-reflection and contemplation, and through shunning material goods. It is thought that through some Indian influence, Sufism developed its particular practice of meditation that includes a focus on breathing and the use of mantras. Judaism and Meditation Practice As well as what is believed to be descriptions of meditation practice in the Torah, the Jewish esoteric method and school of thought of Kabbalah, also includes some of its own forms of meditation. These are generally based around deep thought on philosophical topics and prayer. A History of Meditation in the West Meditation first began to be of interest in the West in the 1700s, when some of the Eastern philosophy texts, containing references to meditation techniques and practices, were translated into different European languages. This included: The Panopisnads - A collection of religious and philosophical texts from India, assumed to have been written between 800 and 500 century BCE. The Bhagavad Gītā - A Sanskrit scripture made of 700 verses that form part of the Mahābhārata; a Hindu epic detailing the narrative between Pandava Prince Arjuna, and Krishna. The Buddhist Sutras - Scriptures that are assumed to be the oral teachings of the Buddha. By the 18th century, meditation was seen only as a topic for discussion and interest by philosophers and intellectuals, including Voltaire and Schopenhauer (Abelson, 2008). It wasn’t until the 20th century that meditation became more prominent, especially in the United States, when a prominent yogi, Swami Vivekananda, delivered a presentation at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. The presentation created a new surge of interest in Eastern models of spirituality in the West, and influenced a number of other spiritual teachers from India to migrate to the States including: Swami Rama from the Himalayan Institute Paramahansa Yogananda from the Self-Realization Fellowship Maharishi Mahesh Yogi with his Transcendental Meditation practice Alongside these teachers, spiritual representatives from different Buddhist schools of thought also began to migrate to the West including individuals from the Zen school of thought and the Theravada school of thought. Every time meditation has been introduced in a new place, it has been shaped by the individual culture it finds itself within. With its introduction in the West, meditation began to become more removed from the religious connections and teachings of its roots and taught in more westernized ways. By the 1960s and 1970s, meditation was being researched via scientific studies, further removing its spiritual contexts and encouraging the practice to be used by anyone, not just those seeking spiritual fulfillment. Benson (1967) began some of the first studies in the West to explore the impact of meditation on mental and physiological outcomes. Benson would go on to write his best selling book, The Relaxation Response, in 1975 and he also founded the Mind Body Medical Institute in the same year. In the late 1970s, Jon Kabat-Zinn discovered meditation through his studies at MIT and also began investigating the potential health benefits of meditative practice. In 1979 he introduced his Mindfulness-Based-Stress-Reduction (MBSR) program and opened the Stress Reduction Clinic. Around this time, Transcendental Meditation was growing in popularity too, with many celebrities turning to the practice to help them cope with fame, including The Beatles. Although during this time many meditation techniques were connected predominantly with hippie culture and were not very mainstream, it wasn’t until the 1990s that this began to change. In 1993 Deepak Chopra published his book Ageless Body, Timeless Mind, and in 1996 it was featured on Oprah, selling more than 137,000 copies in one day. As more celebrities came forward to praise the practice of meditation in their lives, more books about the how-and-why to meditate began to appear. In the 1990s, mindfulness was also growing in its applications. Williams, Teasdale, and Seagal (1995) further developed Jon Kabat-Zinn’s program to be used positively with individuals experiencing depression and anxiety. The Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) approach combined mindfulness with Cognitive Behavioural Therapy with some excellent results. The MBCT approach has been clinically approved by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence in the UK and is considered a ‘treatment of choice’ for depression. By 2012, there were over 700 mindfulness-based programs available across the world and Kabat-Zinn’s original program was the main program used in research on meditation. Today, mindfulness and meditation are prolific across Western society with resources and schools - both online and offline - available to help guide you to find a practice that works for you. The research and medical science communities continue to keep studying meditation’s benefits, with more and more studies demonstrating its positive implications for a range of mental and physical conditions. A Timeline of Meditation’s History Below is a brief timeline of some of the key dates relating to meditation, some of which have already been mentioned: 5,000 BC - 3,500 BC Early development The oldest documented evidence of the practice of meditation is wall art in India. India 1500 BC Hindu Meditation The Vedas, a large body of religious texts, contains the oldest written mention of meditation. India 6th - 5th century BC Early development Development of other forms of meditation in Taoist China and Buddhist India. China, India 6th century BC Buddhist Meditation Siddhartha Gautama sets out to reach Enlightenment, learning meditation in the process. India 8th century BC Buddhist Meditation The expansion of Japanese Buddhism meditation practice spreads into Japan. Japan 10th - 14th century Christian Meditation Hesychasm, a tradition of contemplative prayer in the Eastern Orthodox Church, and involves the repetition of the Jesus prayer. Greece 11th - 12th century AD Islamic Meditation The Islamic concept of Dhikr is interpreted by various meditative techniques and becomes one of the essential elements of Sufism. 18th century Buddhist Meditation The study of Buddhism in the West remains a topic mainly focused upon by intellectuals. Europe, America 1936 Western Research An early piece of scientific research on meditation is published. America 1950s Buddhist Meditation The Vipassana movement, or insight meditation, start in Burma. Burma 1950s Transcendental Meditation Maharishi Mahesh Yogi promotes transcendental meditation. America 1955 Western Research The first piece of scientific research on meditation using EEGs is published. 1960s Transcendental Meditation Swami Rama becomes one of the first yogis to be studied by Western scientists. America 1970s Western Research Jon Kabat-Zinn begins developing a mindfulness program for adults in clinical settings. He calls it mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR). America 1970s Western Research Herbert Benson shows the effectiveness of meditation through his research. America 1977 Western Research James Funderburk publishes an early collection of scientific studies on meditation. America 1979 Medical Application Jon Kabat-Zinn opens the Center for Mindfulness and teaches mindfulness-based stress reduction to treat chronic conditions. America 1981 Vipassana Meditation The first Vipassana meditation centers outside India and Myanmar are established in Massachusetts and Australia. America, Australia 1996 Modern Meditation The Chopra Center for Wellbeing is founded by Deepak Chopra and David Simon. America 2000 Medical Application The first major clinical trial of mindfulness with cancer patients is conducted, with results indicating beneficial outcomes for the mindfulness-based stress reduction programs. America The Beginnings of Mindfulness Meditation Much like meditation, the historical and ancient roots of mindfulness can be traced all over the world, and are heavily mixed with various religious beginnings. Mindfulness as a form of meditation has been traced back to Hinduism, around 1500 BCE, and is heavily connected with the practice of yoga. Yoga in its more ancient roots involved very little reference to movement or postures and placed a greater emphasis on stillness, a focus on breathing, and being present with the body at that moment. Mindfulness in this context has also been traced back to Buddhism and Daoism, both of which include a strong focus on breathing and self-awareness. Many religions include a form of prayer or meditation technique that sees the individual turning their thoughts away from everyday anxieties in search of greater self-awareness and presence in appreciating a greater perspective about life and their religion. This form of meditation is very closely aligned with the practice and purpose of mindfulness. Around 40 years ago mindfulness became more prevalent in Western cultures. Jon Kabat-Zinn is often credited with being the founder of ‘modern day’ mindfulness, and the idea and concept of mindfulness that is commonly held across western cultures. In the 1970s Kabat-Zinn founded the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical school, and since then the school has helped to train and educated more than 18,000 people in the principles of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) - a clinically proven program to help support individuals experiencing a range of conditions including depression, anxiety, insomnia, chronic pain, and cardiovascular problems. Williams, Teasdale, and Seagal (1995) furthered the work of Kabat-Zinn by combining the MBSR with Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to create the Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) program. The program is clinically approved in the UK and is commonly used within clinical psychology to help treat individuals with a range of disorders including personality disorders, chronic pain, emotion regulation, and depression. A Look at the History of Meditation Research As meditation has grown in popularity, so has its interest within the research and psychology communities. The first piece of scientific research on meditation occurred in 1936, and in 1955 the first study using an electroencephalogram (EEG) occurred (Feuerstein, 2014). An EEG records electrical waves of activity in the brain by using electrodes placed across an individual’s head. In the 1960s, some of the first Western research took place at the Menninger Clinic in Kansas, United States, with Swami Rama, a senior Yogi from the Himalayan International Institute of Yoga Science. The studies were led by an American psychologist called Gardner Murphy and specifically focused on investigating Swami Rama’s abilities to control different bodily functions that were previously thought completely involuntary, such as his heartbeat and blood pressure (Feuerstein, 2018). Through the studies, Swami Rama also demonstrated the ability to: Produce different types of brain waves on demand - alpha, delta, theta, and gamma The ability to alter his heartbeat radically, including increasing it to 300 beats per minute for 16 seconds and completely stopping it from beating for a few seconds The ability to remain conscious of the surrounding environment while his brain was in the deep sleep cycle The ability to control his skin and internal body temperature The findings from these studies stimulated further interest across the psychological and medical communities to explore the physiological effects of meditation. Benson, Greenwood, and Klemchuk (1975) examined the effectiveness of meditation to support positive healthcare initiatives. Through his research, he reported that meditation produces a number of physical and biochemical changes within the body, which he collectively called the ‘Relaxation Response’. This was revolutionary at the time as previously meditation was thought of as a religious practice, and therefore not appropriate for medical or health purposes. Benson’s research began to change this opinion and continued the need for further research to fully understand the implications of meditative practice for healthcare. More researchers and psychologists continued to carry out studies looking at the effects of meditation on the mind and body, with a particular focus on addiction, cardiovascular disease, and cognitive functioning (Funderburk, 1977, Brown, Forte & Dysart, 1984, Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 1999, and Carter & Ernst, 2003). Although the body of research has grown, there have in more recent years been concerns around the validity of blanketing some of the findings, with peer-reviewed, a meta-analysis of research finding that many of the research results are inconclusive. In 2000, the Dalai Lama met with psychologists and neuroscientists from Western backgrounds in India, to push the study of accomplished meditation masters with advanced neuroimaging technology and further explore the impact of meditation on the brain. The National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health published one such review in 2007. In their report, the researchers reviewed 813 different studies that examined five different categories of meditation: mantra meditation, mindfulness meditation, Transcendental, and yoga. They focused on studies involving adults, and those that specifically looked at the effects of meditation on physiological conditions such as cardiovascular disease, substance abuse, addiction, and hypertension. From the review, the researchers concluded that there is a lack of quality methodology across studies pertaining to meditation and that there appeared to be no common theoretical perspective across scientific research. Although the quality of the research has certainly improved since the 1960s and 1970s when it first began, the researchers in this review argued that there is still work to be done. A Brief History of Transcendental Meditation Transcendental Meditation is a specific meditative practice, which involves the repetition of a sound called a mantra, for 15-20 minutes, at least twice a day. Transcendental Meditation seeks to help the individual to move into a state of relaxed awareness. This particular technique and movement were introduced in the 1950s by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, an Indian Guru. Maharishi is a title he earned through his work, meaning ‘Great Seer’. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi began as a follower of Swami Brahmananda Saraswati, the spiritual leader of Jyotirmath in the Indian Himalayas. He credits Brahmananda Saraswati with inspiring most of his own teachings and the development of Transcendental Deep meditation, later renamed to Transcendental Meditation. In 1955, Maharishi Mahesh introduced Transcendental Meditation within India and quickly developed a following, which then began to spread out further into the world. Between 1955 and 1965, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi undertook multiple global tours to spread his teachings and spiritual beliefs alongside the practice of Transcendental Meditation. Following the world tours, the practice gained further popularity in the 1970s, with celebrities advocating for the value of the practice. During this time Maharishi Mahesh also began to train others as Transcendental Meditation Teachers and developed schools dedicated to teaching the practice (Russell, 1977). The practice continued to gain popularity throughout the 1990s and 1990s, and by the early 2000s, Transcendental Meditation as a practice and movement had grown to include a variety of associated services including health products, educational programs, and teacher training courses, with millions of people involved. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi remained the leader of what became a huge multinational movement right up until his death in 2008. Tony Nader, a Lebanese researcher, neuroscientist, and author, became Maharishi Mahesh’s successor immediately following his death as the leader for the movement. Transcendental Meditation is still one of the most widely practiced forms of meditation today and remained largely unchanged since its first introduction in the 1950s. It is also one of the most widely researched (Benson and Klipper, 2001). What is Vipassana Meditation? Vipassana is one of the oldest Buddhist meditation practices and can be roughly translated to mean ‘insight’: an awareness of what is happening, exactly as it happens. This is the core distinction between Vipassana Meditation compared with other techniques. It’s important to understand this distinction, in order to fully understand and engage with Vipassana as a meditative technique. Within Buddhism, there are two core forms of meditation and in Pali, these are called Vipassana and Samatha. Samatha is roughly translated to mean ‘tranquility’: when the mind is brought to a resting state and not allowed to wander from thought to thought. The majority of meditative practices focus on Samatha, in that they ask the individual to focus on one thing - a chant, a prayer, a candle, an image - and to exclude all other thoughts. In Vipassana Meditation, the individual is encouraged instead to use their concentration to gain true insight into the nature of their own reality. The ultimate aim is to achieve liberation by breaking down the walls that prevent us from understanding our true reality. As a meditative technique, it is very gradual and achieving liberation can take many years. The technique itself is quite gentle but extremely thorough in helping the individual achieve ultimate mindfulness through a dedicated set of exercises. There are three core stages of the practice: Sīla - meaning ‘morality’ and relating to the giving up of worldly thoughts and desires, Anapanasati - or the ‘mindfulness of breathing’, where the individual brings their awareness to their breathing without control or judgment. Vitarka - where the individual simply names the process of breathing - both physical and mental - without giving it further in-depth thought. By beginning with one inhalation, the technique sees you continue on this path, removing any other awareness of external events around you, and build from there to the next exhalation and so forth. Many people fall over and over again. The purpose is to retrain your mind and create a state of hyper-awareness for everything that is happening within your immediate reality, exactly as it is happening and exactly how it happens. Through Vipassana Meditation you are seeking to create perfect, unbroken awareness with your reality (Pandita, 2018). 9 Recommended Books As meditation becomes more widely acknowledged and accepted, you can find plenty of reading material to help you develop your own practice and knowledge of its powerful benefits. Below I’ve listed a few books to help you get started, broken down by general topics: Books about the history of meditation ‘The Origin of Buddhist Meditation’ by Alexander Wynne (Amazon) ‘Zen Buddhism: A History, India and China’ by Heinrich Dumoulin (Amazon) ‘Zen Buddhism: A History, Japan’ by Heinrich Dumoulin (Amazon) Books about meditation practice ‘Meditation: How to Meditate: A Practical Guide to Making Friends with Your Mind’ by Pema Chödrön (Amazon) ‘Meditation: An in-depth guide’ by Ian Gawler (Amazon) ‘The Science of Meditation: How to Change Your Brain, Mind and Body’ by Daniel Goleman (Amazon) Books about mindfulness ‘Mindfulness for Beginners: Reclaiming the Present Moment—and Your Life’ by Jon Kabat-Zinn (Amazon) ‘Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life’ by Thich Nhat Hanh (Amazon) ‘The Neuroscience of Mindfulness: The Astonishing Science behind How Everyday Hobbies Help You Relax’ by Dr. Stan Rodski (Amazon) 8 Videos on YouTube The more you build your understanding and knowledge of meditation, it’s different origins and ways of practicing, the more likely it is you’ll find a version that works for you. Explore the history can also help you feel better connected with your practice as you have a deeper appreciation for how ancient and varied it is. These popular TEDx videos are a great starting point: Debunking the 5 Most Common Meditation Myths - TEDxVeniceBeach How Mindfulness Meditation Redefines Pain, Happiness & Satisfaction - TEDxSFU Taming Your Wandering Mind - TEDxCocunutGrove If you’re interested in getting started with a meditation practice, a guided video can help you to keep on track and develop a better understanding and connection with the process. Here are a few favorites of mine from YouTube to help you on your way: Body Scan Exercise with Jon Kabat-Zinn Guided Meditation for Detachment from Overthinking 3-Minute Mindful Breathing Meditation (to Relieve Stress) with Stop, Breathe & Think Guided Meditation with Kelsang Jampa - TEDxSarasota Two Minute Guided Meditation - The School of Life A Take Home Message I hope after reading through the history and origins of meditation, you’ll feel a renewed sense of awe for how ancient and inherent to being human the practice is. If there is one thing I’d like you to take away from this article, it’s the idea that, above and beyond any religious affiliations, meditation seems to be a core part of being human. It has been practiced and handed down for centuries, and we should not undervalue how important even a short and simple engagement in meditation practice can be. Especially within our current, hectic daily lives. I’d love to hear your own thoughts on meditation, or if you have any other insights about the origins and history of meditation, please do share them in the comments. We hope you enjoyed reading this article. Don’t forget to download our 3 Mindfulness Exercises for free. Abelson, P. (1993). Schopenhauer and Buddhism. Philosophy East and West Volume 43, Number 2. University of Hawaii Press. Benson, H., Greenwood, M. M., & Klemchuk, H. (1975). The Relaxation Response: Psychophysiologic Aspects and Clinical Applications. Retrieved from: Benson H (1997) The Relaxation Response: Therapeutic Effect. Science: 278. Benson, H., & Klipper, M. Z. (2001). The Relaxation Response. New York, NY: Quill. Brown, D., Forte, M., & Dysart, M. (1984). Differences in visual sensitivity among mindfulness meditators and non-meditators. Perceptual and Motor Skills, 58 (3). Canter, P. H., & Ernst, E. (2003). 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