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# EXCLUSIVE WEBINAR PRESENTATION

## Meditation for Dietitians: Applications in Science and Life



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Presented by **Jenna Hollenstein, MS, RDN, CDN**

# Jenna Hollenstein, MS, RDN, CDN



- **Affiliations:** Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, AND Behavioral Health Nutritionists, AND SCAN, AND Nutrition Entrepreneurs, IAEDP, Shambhala NYC Meditation Center.
- **Disclosures:** Jenna works with/for the Open Heart Project.

# Learning Objectives

After completing this continuing education course, nutrition professionals should be able to:

1. Provide a simple definition of meditation, including what it is and what it isn't.
2. Describe the personal benefits of a meditation practice.
3. Describe the professional benefits of a meditation practice for dietitians.
4. Describe the benefits of meditation to nutrition therapy clients.

# Our Plan

- What meditation is and isn't
  - The science of meditation
  - Why is meditation important for RDs?\*
    - Personally
    - Professionally
    - For our clients
- Practice together
  - Q&A



\* don't take my word for it; try this out in your own life

# Who Am I?

- Personally
- Professionally
- Working with clients





# Meditation: Spirituality Meets Science

- “When neurons fire together, they wire together” ~psychologist Donald Hebb on how mental activity creates new neural structures
- Neuroplasticity: “The mind is what the brain does”
- Brain’s survival strategies → suffering
- Path to wakefulness = training the mind



# Definition #1

"Meditation is not a matter of trying to achieve ecstasy, spiritual bliss, or tranquility, nor is it attempting to be a better person. It is simply the creation of a space in which we are able to expose and undo our neurotic games, our self-deceptions, our hidden fears and hopes."

~Chogyam Trungpa

# Definition #2

Merriam-Webster:

*To engage in mental exercise (as concentration on one's breathing or repetition of a mantra) for the purpose of reaching a heightened level of spiritual awareness.*





# Definition #3

“Substituting for our discursive mind another object of attention”

~ My meditation teacher, Susan Piver

# Types of Meditation

- Focused attention
  - ***Shamatha***, Zen, Loving-kindness, Chakra, Kundalini, Sound, Mantra, Pranayama, Qigong
- Open monitoring
  - Mindfulness meditation, Vipassana, Taoist
- Effortless presence
  - Self-enquiry, Dzogchen, Mahamudra, Taoist, Raja
- Check out: <http://liveanddare.com/types-of-meditation/>

# What Meditation Is

- Synchronizing mind and body
  - Meditation vs. meditative activities
- Meditation = Mindfulness + Awareness
  - Mindfulness – technique
  - Awareness – insight
- A way to relax  
(but not in the way you think!)



# What Meditation Isn't

- Religious
- Self-help
- Doing nothing
- A way to stop thinking/space out/calm down



# Science of Meditation

# What Happens in the Brain

- Structure:
  - Increased gray matter in anterior cingulate cortex, prefrontal cortex, and hippocampus
  - Decreased brain cell volume in amygdala
  - Weakened connections between amygdala and prefrontal cortex
- Function:
  - Frontal lobe goes “offline”
  - Parietal lobe processing slows down
  - Thalamus slows down sensory inputs
  - Reticular formation decreases arousal



# What Happens in the Body

- Lower cortisol levels
- Decreased symptoms associated with
  - Depression
  - Anxiety disorders
  - Pain
  - Insomnia
- Increased focus and concentration



# Meditation Has Also Been Studied in:

- Cardiovascular disease
- Coronary heart disease
- Diabetes
- Hypertension
- Respiratory disease
- Rheumatic disease
- Alzheimer's disease
- Immune function
- Inflammation
- PTSD
- Bipolar disorder
- Smoking cessation
- Alcoholism
- Binge eating disorder
- and more...



# Personal Benefits of Meditation

# Three Marks of Existence

- Impermanence
  - The only constant is change
- Suffering
  - First and second dart
- No self (egolessness)
  - Not so solid, not so separate



# Professional Benefits of Meditation

# Meditation in the Healthcare Setting

- Review article on mindfulness and meditation interventions among physicians, nurses, and psychologists
  - Overall results indicate improved well-being and ability to cope with stress among clinicians
  - Studies also evaluating patients of clinicians found benefits to patients personally and to the patient-clinician relationship
- Modified MBSR program in pre-med and med students
  - Reduced psychological distress (including depression) and state and trait anxiety
  - Increased empathy and spirituality



# Teaching Self-Care to Mental Health Professionals

- Prospective, cohort-controlled study of a modified MBSR vs. two control courses among 54 graduate psychology students
- MBSR participants had
  - Decreased
    - perceived stress, negative affect, state and trait anxiety, and rumination (self-regulation)
  - Increased
    - positive affect and self-compassion
    - mindfulness
  - Note:
    - relationship between self-compassion and effectiveness in counseling
    - Short duration of practice needed to experience benefits

# Meditation for Those Who Work in Palliative Care Settings

- 27 publications included
- Among informal caregivers there were improvements in mood (depression and anxiety), stress, and self-efficacy at an average of 8 weeks following intervention initiation
- Among health professionals there were improvements in emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment, self-efficacy, and life satisfaction at an average of 8 weeks following intervention initiation

# Four Immeasurables

- Loving-kindness – wish for others’ happiness & recognizing no separation between you and others
- Compassion – feeling others’ pain in your own heart
- Sympathetic joy – feeling others’ happiness in your own heart
- Equanimity – “the mind of no preference”





# Meditation Benefits to Our Patients

# What Meditation Can Teach Our Patients About How to Eat

- Synchronizing body and mind
- Revealing the true nature of our minds and bodies
- Development of non-judgmental curiosity and self-compassion
- Expanding and accommodating a range of physical and emotional states



# A Word of Caution in Using Meditation with Clients

- Meditation is not a panacea
- Meditation is not medication
- Meditation may not be for everyone



# Common Barriers to Meditating

- Not knowing where to begin
- Misconceptions about meditation
- No time (duh!)
- Perfectionism
- Lack of support



# If You Would Like To

- Practice
  - Find a technique that is at least 2500 years old
  - Find a trained MI
  - Pair with study
- Teach
  - Learn how
  - Have your own consistent personal practice

# Breath Awareness Meditation

- Shamatha = the practice of tranquility
- Simplicity, precision, gentleness
- 3 foundations of mindfulness
  - Body
  - Breath
  - Mind



# Let's Try It



# Questions?

Thank You!

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# Open Heart Project

## Meditation Instructor Training Course

- September 26 – November 21, 2017
- Opening registration early to attendees of today's program
- Learn more:  
<http://susanpiver.com/meditation-instructor-training/>
- Bonus download: free pdf of “5 mindfulness lessons every coach can use”

# Suggested Scientific Resources

- Sara Lazar, PhD: Publications. Harvard University website.  
[http://scholar.harvard.edu/sara\\_lazar/publications](http://scholar.harvard.edu/sara_lazar/publications)
- The Saron Lab. University of California, Davis website.  
<http://saronlab.ucdavis.edu/shamatha-project.html>
- American Mindfulness Research Association website.  
[www.goAMRA.org](http://www.goAMRA.org)



# Additional Resources to Explore

- Chödrön P. ***Start Where You Are: A Guide to Compassionate Living***. Boulder, CO: Shambhala; 2001.
- Hanson R, Mendius R. ***Buddha's Brain: The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love, and Wisdom***. 1st ed. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications; 2009.
- Piver S. ***Start Here Now: An Open-Hearted Guide to the Path and Practice of Meditation***. 1st ed. Boulder, CO: Shambhala; 2015.
- Insight. Insight Timer website. <https://insighttimer.com/>
- Open Heart Project. Susan Piver website. <http://susanpiver.com/open-heart-project/>

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