

Your
MENOPAUSE SUPPORT
Guide



KNOW YOUR MENOPAUSE
AND THINGS WHICH CAN
HELP YOU BALANCE YOUR HORMONES BETTER



Many women go through a tough menopause. By this book we hope to help you make your journey **BETTER.**

“
WE ARE SO
GLAD
WE MET!
”

This book is for informational purposes only. It does not provide or replace any medical advice or advice from your health practitioner. This is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. We advise you to see your health care practitioner if you suspect you have any health problems.

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UNDERSTANDING THE SYMPTOMS

Menopause symptoms are mostly associated with the decline of female hormones and many women find it hard to deal with them. Disruption in the function of estrogen and progesterone can be severe due to significantly lower levels. Changes during menopause can affect mental as well as physical health of many women and it can last for few years. Menopause symptoms are subjective, and every woman may not suffer from similar symptoms.

*Hot Flush
is the most
common symptom
experienced
by most women.*

MOST COMMON SYMPTOMS OF MENOPAUSE ARE AS BELOW

Hot flush and Night sweats
Mood disturbances
Vaginal dryness and decreased libido
Organ prolapses and incontinence
Skin and Hair changes
Weight Gain

There are many other symptoms which are results of consequences of this issues or other conditions together. Such as sleep disturbances from night sweats.

Sleep disorders	Digestive problems	Fatigue
Irritability	Bloating	Dizziness
Headaches	Gum problems	Migraine
Brittle nails	Burning tongue	
Osteoporosis	Body odour	
Joint pain	Allergies	

TIPS AND TRICKS TO TREAT YOUR HOT FLASHES



There are a number of low-risk coping strategies and lifestyle changes that may be helpful for managing hot flashes. Natural herbal supplements are a good option. They may take time to build up in system but help to relieve symptoms. In worst cases, if hot flashes remain very disruptive, prescription drug therapy may be considered.

Daily breather may help calm hot flashes.

Regular, daily practice of calm or slow breathing is key for this alternative technique to ease hot flashes. Night sweats are also one of the most common symptoms in women who have hot flashes.

What can help manage night sweats?

- Keep cold water by the bed ready to drink at the first sign of a sweat.
- Use cotton sheets and cotton night clothes.
- Sleep under layers, so that extra bed covers can be removed easily.
- Have a small fan running to keep the air moving while sleeping.
- Some women find they can relieve symptoms if they switch to deep, slow abdominal breathing (controlled breathing) at the first sign of a hot flush.

See next page for the list of lifestyle habits and changes you can try to reduce severity of hot flashes.

Keeping your body cool can help keep hot flushes at bay.
Here are just some of the cool tricks:



- Keep **ice water** handy to sip.
Stay hydrated with cool fluids will turn down the thermostat.
Use a **ceiling fan or air conditioning**. Keep a small fan at work
- Dress cool—**wear cotton, linen, or rayon**, and avoid wool, other synthetic fabrics, and silk.
Stick to **open-necked shirts**.
- **Dress in layers** so you can take something off if you're feeling warm.
- At night, take a cool **shower before bed**, wear cotton night clothes or loose fitness clothing designed to wick away moisture, and keep an ice pack under your pillow. Sleep in a cooler room.
Get a bigger bed if you and your partner are on different “heat planets.”
- **Reduce intake of caffeine, alcohol, hot drinks and spicy foods**.
Also, avoid hot flush triggers (eg, spicy food and alcohol)
- **Keep a diary** of when hot flushes occur and what you're doing when they occur; this may help identify the ‘triggers’ that cause flushes and help you find ways to avoid them.
- **Consider meditation**. Practise relaxation therapy to reduces stress
- Consider other lifestyle strategies, such as a **healthy diet, regular exercise and not smoking**.
Follow a diet that is higher in vegetables, fruits and fibre, and lower in meat, sugar and trans fats
Keep a packet of **pre-moistened tissues/towels**, such as baby wipes, handy for when hot flushes occur.

Some women find it helpful to share their experiences with other women as part of a support group.
Meetings can be face-to-face or held over the telephone or internet.

MENOPAUSE AND WEIGHT GAIN



Weight gain is one of the most common and probably the most frustrating symptoms of menopause affecting for up to 90% of menopausal women. The most unwanted part of menopausal weight gain is the distribution of fat to the abdominal area. Unfortunately, menopause-associated weight gain does not evenly distribute throughout the body. You may find that even though your diet and lifestyle has not changed for many years, you are noticing the number on the scale is increasing. Also, for some women, the number may remain the same with fat building in the midsection giving pear or apple shaped look.

Estrogen role:

Fall in reproductive hormone levels mainly estrogen, tends to affect body fat distribution and shifts fat to the midsection. Some research suggests that when estrogen level decreases in the body, body tried to make estrogen from other sources.

Although the exact mechanism is still unclear, fat cells can produce estrogen. Hence, the body converts excess calories into fat with an intention of increasing estrogen levels. This extra fat does not burn easily and leads to weight gain.

Decreased progesterone is linked to water retention and bloating (not causing actual weight gain) which may make a woman feel heavier.

Other menopause-related factors which play a role include:

Vasomotor symptoms such as hot flushes and night sweats cause sleep disturbances eventually leading to tiredness leading to poor adherence to an active lifestyle. Taking some extra rest may look more interesting when you do not sleep well. Menopausal mood swings are very common and may affect dietary and exercise habits.



1. Focus on your diet

Exercise only will not help to lose weight but watching your calories alongside will help to achieve as well as sustain a healthy weight. Do not do drastic changes or follow popular diet trends, rather choose a diet which is suitable for your lifestyle and you can follow rightly.

Divide 3 meals into 5 parts for better results.

This will reduce temptation to snack.

Fill diet rich with fibres and low carbohydrates.

Controlling the portion (e.g. use smaller plates!) will help.



2. Exercise

A regular aerobic exercise of moderate physical activity for at least 30-60 minutes on most days will give a boost to your metabolism. Strength training under supervision may help to build muscle mass and will make bones stronger.

Stretching and yoga may help to reduce waist circumference. Working out with a friend or partner will sometimes help to improve adherence to exercise program.

3. Watch your drink

Rather than a fruit juice which is high in sugar and low in fibre, choose nuts or whole fruit as a snack. Limit your alcohol intake. It will only make your health and diet plans worse.

Reducing the amount of sugar in tea or coffee will also help to cut down some extra sugar.



Accepting the age related changes positively and persistently working towards lifestyle changes will definitely help to achieve a healthy body.

HAIR LOSS IN MENOPAUSE



Most of the women notice changes in their hair pattern during menopause or later especially when the volume, growth and quality of the hair worsens.

For most of the women, our hair is often a part of one's personality and expression, something they like to decide how to wear it or style it. Because of this, losing a lot of hair may make us feel less in control.

Although it is believed to be estrogen and progesterone which may have a protective role and help the growth of hair, menopause is not the only cause to blame for FPHL.

Most women experience a typical hair loss pattern called Female pattern hair loss (FPHL) with thinning of hair at the crown of the head, sides, top of the head and general thinning all over the head.

Large clumps may fall while showering and brushing the hair due to mechanical stress. Most women experience overall hair thinning rather than excessive or noticeable major hair loss like bald spots in men unless there is an underlying medical condition or due to medical treatment such as chemotherapy.



There may be other causes of hair loss. Such as,

1. Ageing affects the whole body and sometimes cosmetic measures do not help to age.
2. Genetics play a role in hair loss too and hair loss varies across ethnic groups.
3. Acute stress such as illness.
4. Poor diet and lack of nutrition.
5. Emotional stress.
6. Iron deficiency, anaemia and low ferritin.
7. Thyroid dysfunction.
8. Skin disorder affecting the scalp.
9. Raised testosterone levels.

What can I do?

Step 1 : Eat Well

Step 2 : Hydrate yourself

Step 3 : Reduce Stress

Step 4 : Get some exercise

Hair oil massage with suitable essential oils may help. Massaging scalp will improve blood circulation and improve growth of hair. Topical hair growth solutions approved by doctors may be tried. These may take several months to take effect and usually are required on an ongoing basis.

Try to use less extreme heat causing tools such as straighteners and hair dryers. Excessive heat can damage hair follicles and dry them up which makes them more vulnerable to damage. Instead, use a thickening shampoo and conditioner which may improve hair appearance. Seek professional help if required. Avoid tight ponytails and braids which stretch your hair a bit too extra and pull them away from the scalp which loosens the bond between hair and scalp in long run. Keep bleaches and chemical away if possible as they can cause irreversible damage to hair follicles.



Wear a swim cap to protect your hair from chlorine while swimming.

Protect bald areas of your scalp from direct sun to prevent further damage to the skin.

A hat will help to prevent dryness and breakage on sunny and windy days.

Some medications have side effects that could cause hair loss. Talk to your doctor if you're concerned about any medicines that you think may be causing significant hair loss.

Menopause-related hair loss will slow down with time. It can be challenging and upsetting. Taking care of general health and nutrition may help it to slow down and improve the quality of your hair.

Consult your doctor if you have any unusual symptoms such as losing hair rapidly at an early age or losing hair in an unusual pattern, have pain or itching with hair loss and scalp becomes red or scaly. You should contact your doctor for any other additional symptoms which concern you to avoid any underlying condition.

SKIN PROBLEMS IN MENOPAUSE

Estrogen is the key hormone in women's reproductive health, but it also plays an important part in keeping your skin youthful and healthy via stimulating the production of collagen and oil which maintains skin elasticity. Scientists are also researching estrogen's role in wound healing, possibility of protecting against skin cancers and sun damage.

How menopause affects the skin

When estrogen levels decrease, your skin dries out and becomes thinner, especially in sensitive areas. However, there is no evidence to suggest that menopause causes any specific type of rash or skin disease. There are other key factors with decreased estrogen which can impact your skin which includes – sun damage, dehydration, smoking, fat redistribution, genetics.

Also, in menopause, the body becomes more vulnerable to changes in temperature and your skin more sensitive to redness and irritation. Sensitive skin may react more to itchy or synthetic fabrics, soaps, perfumes, dyes or beauty products. Increased sensitivity and discomfort leads to scratching which can cause hives and rashes.

Estrogen receptors are most abundant around the genital area, face and lower limbs. Therefore, these areas are affected more due to reduced amounts of circulating estrogen and are more common to have certain skin conditions.

THINNING SKIN

A decline in estrogen, causes the skin to get thinner and more delicate, making it more prone to damage as well as more frequent bruising.

FACIAL HAIR

Many women notice facial hair growth during menopause, especially under the chin, along the jawline, or on the upper lip although it had not previously grown.

AGE SPOTS

Age spots are a sign of previous sun damage and very common in menopausal women. Wearing sunscreen consistently and from an early age is the best way to prevent age spots and skin cancer developing later in life.

ALOPECIA

Most women experience a typical hair loss pattern called Female pattern hair loss (FPHL) with thinning of hair at the crown of the head, sides, top of the head and general thinning all over the head.

KERATODERMA CLIMACTERICUM

The main symptom of this condition is thickening of the skin on palms and soles which can be itchy, painful with cracks and be splitting in severe cases.

ACNE

Menopause may also lead to acne in some people due to hormonal changes.

VAGINAL SYMPTOMS

Atrophic vulvovaginitis – means thinning of vaginal skin which may lead to itching, tender skin, burning sensation and painful urination.

Vulvovaginal candidiasis – Candida infection / fungal infection of the vagina which is common due to hormonal changes.

Bacterial vaginosis – Bacterial infection of vagina which may have foul smelling discharge in most cases. However, some women are asymptomatic.

Vaginitis – Inflammation of the vaginal area which can happen due to several reasons and may have significant discharge.

Vulvar lichen sclerosis – Signs and symptoms generally include itchy, irritated, thinned or wrinkled skin, recurring vaginal tear and painful intercourse. This chronic disease mainly affects the anogenital area.

How to prevent skin problems?

Skin problems in menopause are the result of hormonal changes as well as other factors which contribute to them. There are a few simple steps that women can take to prevent them.



Regularly moisturize your skin

Use a suitable gentle, fragrance free and colour free moisturiser after the shower to hydrate your skin which will reduce possibilities of irritation or inflammation due to fewer additives. For someone with dry skin, regular soaps can be irritant and drying which can be replaced with a gentle cleanser.

Sun protection

Try to use sunscreen even on minimal time in the sun to prevent skin damage due to sun exposure. Addition of hats, sunglasses and protective clothing helps to cover the skin as well.



Avoid

Harsh exfoliants or other strong products which may be damaging dry and delicate skin.

There can be some other medical conditions which can bring out rash and may not relate to menopause. Such as dermatitis (eczema), psoriasis lichen planus, rosacea and shingles.

You need to consult your doctor:

- If you have a fever with the rash.
- If the rash or similar skin problem is present all over your body and/or spreads quickly.
- If you have an infectious rash with blisters filled with yellow or green fluid or hot to touch the skin.

See your doctor or dermatologist: For any suspicious skin spots or other concerning symptoms, consult your doctor for further advice. Some simple looking skin conditions may require medical attention.

MENOPAUSE AND WORKPLACE

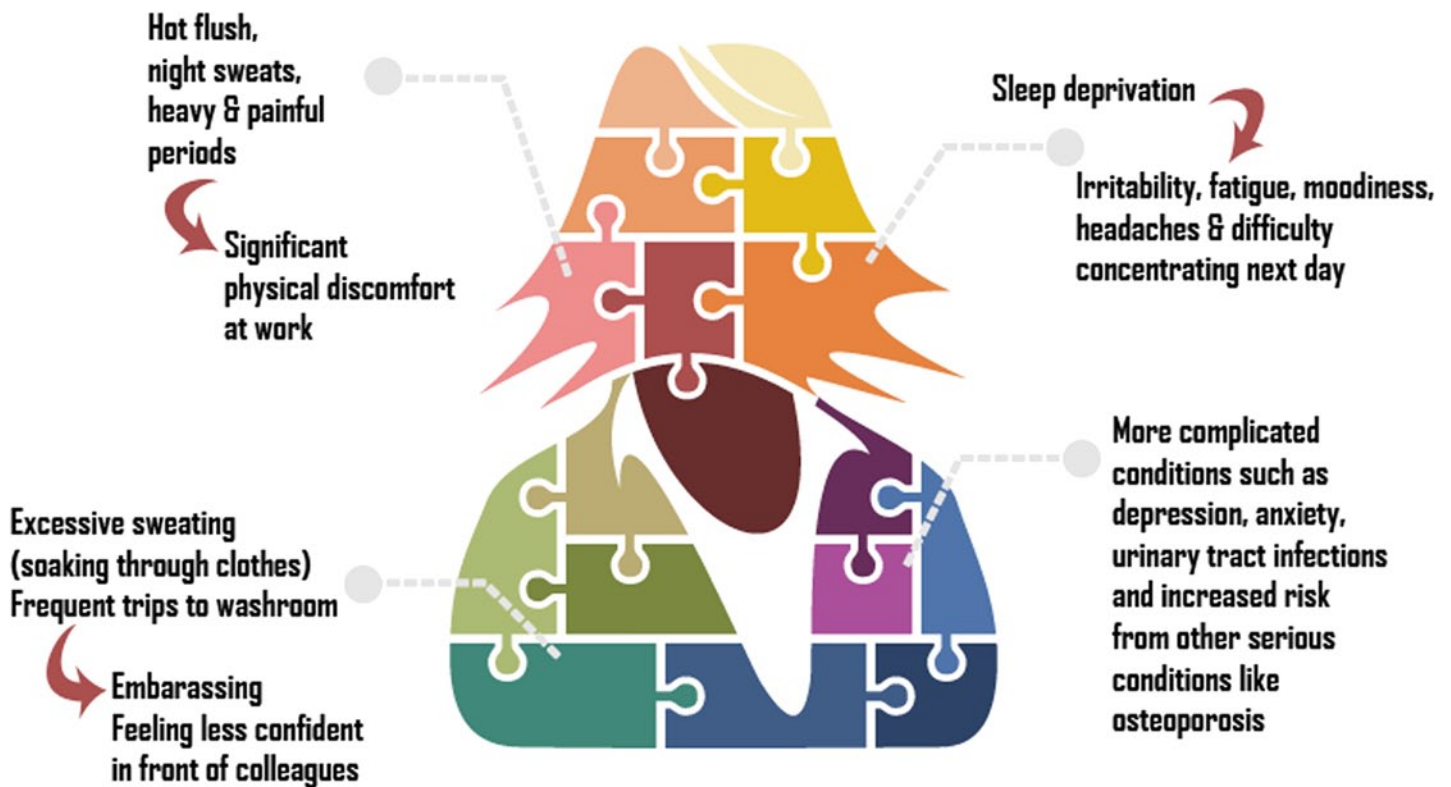


We are in a world where women are working longer. Looking at the age range, the time when menopause affects women in their lives and providing that it may last for few years (average four years), many women may go through menopause while they are still working.

Women at or approaching the menopause, those who have had a premature menopause (before the age of 40) or a hysterectomy fall into the group of females who often have difficulties dealing with menopause while working.

Symptoms can vary amongst individuals affected but main symptoms include hot flushes, night sweats, heavy and painful periods and related symptoms such as sleep disruption. Sleep deprivation can lead to irritability, fatigue, moodiness, headaches and difficulty concentrating next day. This can be problematic when you are dealing with customers and in stressful situations. Severe flushes can sometimes cause sweat to soak through clothing. All these symptoms pose significant and embarrassing problems for some women, leaving them feeling less confident. These symptoms can affect the quality of both personal and working life for women.

Work conditions like poor ventilation, high-temperature work environment or the bathroom too far away can make symptoms worse and aggravate menopause-related discomfort. Other conditions linked to the menopause include heart palpitations, cystitis/urinary tract infections and even increased the risk of other, more serious conditions such as osteoporosis. These symptoms can begin 2 to 7 years before the menopause, during the transitional time known as peri-menopause, when production of the female hormones, estrogen and progesterone, decrease. It is obviously not much fun while you go through these symptoms in the background and thus it can make your normal routine tasks much harder work to do.



Menopausal symptoms affecting woman at work

Employers have responsibilities for the health and safety of all their employees, hence there is a good reason to consider the needs of this group of workers. Most of the organisations do not have clear processes to support women at this stage of life compared to while being pregnant or having other medical conditions. Regular, informal conversations between manager and employee may enable discussion of changes in health. It may be valuable simply to acknowledge that menopause is a normal stage of life and that adjustments can be easily made. Such conversations can identify support at work that can help women.

However, employers need to recognise that the majority of women are unwilling to disclose menopause-related health problems to their managers, especially when they are men and younger than them and struggle to cope with their symptoms as this is not a subject that is easily spoken about. This may have to be through human resources, a welfare officer or an occupational health professional.

The menopause has been regarded as a taboo subject. But this is changing as employers gradually acknowledge the potential impact of the menopause on women and become aware of the simple steps they can take to be supportive.

These are few steps that can be adapted by managers/ employers below:

- Raise awareness to convey the message that the menopause can present difficulties for some women at work.
- Review control of workplace temperature and ventilation.
Provision of a desk fan in an office, or locating a workstation near an opening window or away from a heat source.
- If sleep is disturbed, later start times might be helpful. Consider flexible working hours or shift changes.
- Provide access to cold drinking water in all work situations, including off-site venues. Ensure access to washroom facilities and toilets, including when travelling or working in temporary locations.
- Restroom access is important because menopausal women are more susceptible to bladder infections and/or urinary incontinence during menopause.
- Where uniforms are compulsory, a flexibility of including the use of thermally comfortable fabrics or avoiding the use of synthetic materials like nylon, optional layers and the provision of change room will be helpful.
- In customer-focused or public facing roles, it may help to have access to a quiet room for a short break so as to manage a severe hot flush.

What women can do to manage their menopausal symptoms at work:

- Discuss your practical needs with your manager or HR.
- Use technology to organise and manage your tasks better, e.g. use reminders or note taking.
- If there is an occupational health service available, discuss possible work adjustments and resources which can be helpful.
- If those you work with are supportive, this can make a big difference. Talk about your symptoms and solutions with colleagues, particularly those who are also experiencing symptoms, use humour to deflect embarrassment, and work out your preferred coping strategies and working patterns.
- Avoid hot flush triggers (such as hot food and drinks) especially before presentations or meetings.
- Relaxation techniques such as mindfulness and other potentially helpful techniques such as cognitive behavioural therapy can help reduce the impact of symptoms.
- Consider lifestyle changes such as weight reduction, smoking cessation and exercise.



MINDFULNESS AND RELAXATION TECHNIQUES DURING MENOPAUSE

Most of the menopausal women need options that they can use instead of or in addition to whatever treatment they have for hot flashes and other menopausal symptoms.

A systemic review was done for self-administered mind-body therapies on menopausal symptoms. Interventions included in the review were – yoga and/or meditation-based programs, Tai chi, and other relaxation practices, including muscle relaxation and breath-based techniques, relaxation response training, and low-frequency sound-wave therapy.

Most of the studies in review suggested the beneficial effects of these techniques in alleviating vasomotor symptoms, mood and sleep improvement and reduction in musculoskeletal pain. However, a few limitations such as methods of study, number of subjects and complicating interpretation of findings, preclude the firm conclusion regarding efficacy.

Alternative therapies, lifestyle changes and behavioural interventions can be important for individuals who are not able to take hormone therapies due to other medical conditions, drug interactions or who simply prefer not to take medications.

There are many techniques for the interventions depending on the practitioner or trainer who teaches them.

We have tried here to shed light on some of them.

Yoga

Yoga is an ancient discipline of the mind, body, and spirit originating in India at least 4000 years ago. It involves physical poses, breathing exercises (Pranayama), and meditation to calm the mind, increase awareness, and enhance both mental and physical well-being.

TAI CHI

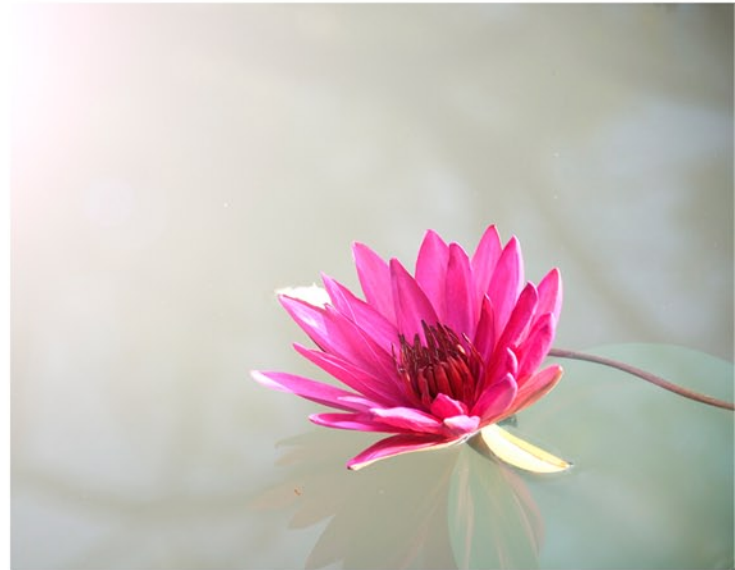
Tai Chi has originated in China centuries ago. Tai Chi uses slow, flowing, dance-like body movements, coupled with deep breathing to achieve mental and physical balance, relaxation, focus, and awareness.

BREATHING

Deep breathing, paced respiration or any other sort of breathing exercise technique represents a behavioural intervention which may help to reduce symptoms related to menopause.

Many relaxation-based interventions targeting hot flush have included paced respiration or other breathing training programs as one of several treatment components. These interventions have been tested in healthy peri- and postmenopausal women and in samples of breast cancer survivors.

Perhaps because slow deep breathing seems risk-free and accessible, menopause practitioners may have altered the tested protocol to a more generalized set of instructions to suit patient needs in practice.



PACED BREATHING

Paced respiration is slow, deliberate, deep abdominal breathing that is sustained for a specified period of time similar to that taught in yoga and other meditative disciplines.

Evidence to date suggests that paced respiration at 6 to 8 breaths per minute and when practised for 15 minutes, twice per day and applied at the onset of hot flushes can be helpful for healthy peri- and postmenopausal women in decreasing both the number and severity of this bothersome menopausal symptom.

DEEP BREATHING

One of the techniques recommended managing hot flush is to breathe deeply. Inhale deeply and then exhale, trying to make your exhalation as long as your inhalation. Repeat several times as needed.

Women with respiratory conditions, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or emphysema may need to do this under expert supervision.

MINDFULNESS

The simple meaning of Mindfulness is 'remembering and maintaining to be aware' – of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations and surroundings whether it be during meditation, or while doing anything, anywhere, anytime.

Being mindful involves acceptance, meaning that we pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without judging them.

It is generally considered a method taught and practised in the context of Buddhism, which is a non-sectarian philosophy founded in India around 400BC by the Buddha Shakyamuni.

MEDITATION

A simple explanation of meditation is it's a concept about clearing the mind of thoughts and achieve the subconscious state of mind. For most of us, the ability to fully still the mind is beyond our potential and so when we come to try meditation without proper guidance, we may think we've failed if the thoughts just keep coming and so we give up.

There are numerous Physiological, Psychological and Spiritual benefits of meditation. However, Practising meditation in daily life is necessary to achieve the highest state of mind.

RELAXATION

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION was developed by Edmund Jacobson in the early 1920s is a technique for reducing stress and inducing calm by alternately tensing and relaxing the muscles.

APPLIED RELAXATION was developed in the late 1970's to train individuals to relax rapidly even when exposed to anxiety-provoking situations.



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