



The Power of the Mind

By Rev. Rebecca A. Nagy

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It was 1976, and my first year as an assistant buyer for Lord & Taylor, New York. For years I had been challenged by back and neck pain, and finally had found an osteopath, with the wonderfully fitting name of “Dr. Bachrach” who led me to the startling discovery of my mind and body connection, and the ability I had within myself to accelerate healing - called “meditation”. Over the ensuing years, we achieved some dramatic results through my learning some relatively simply breathing, relaxation and visualization techniques, which, when combined with physical therapy, allowed me to reach levels within myself that not only aided me in my physical challenges over the years,

but also led me to formerly unrealized levels of creativity and self improvement.

These experiences sent me on an avid search into the realm of the body/mind/spirit connection, subsequently studying both Eastern and Western methods including TM[®], The Silva Method, The Relaxation Response, Conscious Breathing, Hemi Sync[®] and other forms of Meditation and Contemplative Prayer. Throughout the years, what I continued to find is that our mind is one of the most, if not THE most, powerful tool we have for change and transformation – in wellness, creativity, attaining work/life balance and achieving goals.

Over the years, I developed a system that enabled me, in my former career as an executive in the fast-paced world of fashion design and merchandising, to access deep levels of relaxation, focus and enhanced healing abilities - whether on a plane jetting to Milan or holding onto a subway strap during rush hour. The basic way I learned meditation, and how I have taught it now for over 20 years, revolves around a five step process, combining both Eastern techniques and Western technologies:

1. Breathing
2. Relaxation
3. Creative Visualization
4. Concentration
5. Meditation

Mastering each step is a necessity if you are to realize the maximum potentials of meditation. However, developing a meditation practice can be difficult for us in the West, as sitting and “doing nothing” for 20 minutes twice a day (the optimum workout) isn’t exactly ingrained into our goal-oriented regimes. But on the days that I do *not* allow myself this all-important “inner workout” I find that I cannot accomplish nearly as much in my work schedule nor in my personal life.

Breathing is a process that I have found we don’t really know how to optimize in our stressful, shallow-breathing, high anxiety world. Most of us breathe from our lungs, not realizing the fullest benefit of a deep, oxygenated, diaphragmatic breath. So the first step is to learn to breathe with complete, full breaths. This in itself begins the second step towards relaxation and can take several weeks to retrain old habits.

Besides taking the *time* to establish your meditation practice, the second challenge is what is called “monkey mind” – that state whereupon your mind begins to make lists and jump from thought to thought

about three minutes or so into your practice. Here is where “filling your mind in order to empty your mind” becomes important, if you are not to become frustrated. So we begin to give ourselves something to concentrate on – by focusing on relaxing each set of muscles in our body while counting our breaths, and releasing tensions we are holding. This of course, is where having a teacher or being a part of a structured class becomes all-important. There are a variety of exercises that can be practiced during this period of the training that will allow you to begin to make the body/mind connection.

The third step – creative visualization, is something that every athlete in the world has put into play in order to reach their desired goals. When combined with positive affirmations that also engage the emotions, a state of peace and calm can be achieved by the addition of repeating a word or phrase over and over until you realize that desired state of being. The word or phrase can be anything you choose, but usually we all are seeking peace, so I begin with using “peace” as the beginning affirmation – or mantra. Here again, a facilitator is highly desirable, as there are endless versions of going on an inner journey to a sacred, peaceful place and reaching out with your inner senses to experience it to the fullest. The important fact to remember here, is what the mind can conceive, the body can achieve!

As we become expert at holding a visualization, a deep state of concentration can be experienced. This level of concentration is where the “monkey mind” is finally tamed, and leads to the ultimate experience of total and deep levels of stillness and calm – and meditation.

Just as building any muscle takes regular practice, so too does building the brain muscle. Usually after about six weeks, if done consistently every day, you can at least establish the habit of putting yourself into a deep place of peace and relaxation. Deep concentration and Meditation take longer, and are totally dependant on your willingness to keep at it – as with any other exercise regime. But I can assure you that the benefits you will derive in your life – on a physical, psychological, emotional and ultimately, spiritual, level – will offer such richness to your life that you will never want to miss those few hours every week.

Rebecca Nagy is an ordained, interfaith minister and has been teaching relaxation and meditation to groups and individuals for over 20 years. She has spoken and conducted seminars all over the country for corporations, spiritual groups and academic programs. She is the founder of New Directions Whole Life Center in Charlotte, NC. She may be reached at: 704-588-4623