Mindfulness Meditation: A Silver Bullet?

What if there was a single pill you could take to reduce blood pressure, ease anxiety, improve concentration, and make you happier—all with no side effects? Chances are, everyone would be clamoring for it. While not in pill form, mindfulness meditation—the act of sitting quietly for 20 to 30 minutes once or twice a day and emptying your mind—appears to initiate these significant results.

An ancient and fundamental principle in many religions and worldviews, mindfulness meditation is nothing new, but the controlled studies scientifically outlining the effects are. In the past year, various researchers have concluded that the practice contributes to a greater sense of well-being (happiness, optimism, and life satisfaction), less negativity, greater immunity, enhanced sleep, and improved behavioral and emotional disorders (anxiety, panic attacks, depression, eating disorders, and obsessive-compulsive disorder).

With practice, mindfulness meditation can become a part of everyday experiences, helping you to become more present in each moment and activity, be a better listener, deal more effectively with your own emotional responses, and slow down long enough to smell the proverbial roses.

While meditating with a group can help you cultivate the discipline, the practice can also be done alone. Numerous books and audiotapes/CDs are available to help with this endeavor. For more information on mindfulness meditation, visit www.meditationcenter.com.

Scientific Validation for Healing Touch

In an attempt to bridge the gap between the use of Healing Touch (HT) and the lack of randomized controlled trials, researchers from Barnes-Jewish Hospital (St. Louis, Mo.) recently studied the effects of HT on 78 subjects undergoing radiation treatment. Using strict criteria, the HT group received treatment from practitioners with a minimum of Level II certification. The control group received mock sessions from a layperson with no knowledge of HT. All subjects received six sessions (30 minutes each) of either HT or the mock therapy after radiation treatments. Compared to the mock treatment, the HT group experienced statistically significant better outcomes in physical functioning, pain, general health, vitality, social functioning, emotional well-being, and mental health.

As defined by the North American Nursing Diagnosis Association, an energy field disturbance is a “disruption in the flow of energy surrounding a person’s being that results in a disharmony of the body, mind, and/or spirit,” such as that caused by radiation treatments. HT addresses such energy imbalances by using the hands to clear, energize, and balance human energy fields, ultimately stimulating the body’s innate ability to help heal itself.