

Meditation and Mindfulness:

Healing and Wellness for the Breast Cancer Survivor

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The evidence from numerous studies conducted over the last 30 years shows that these techniques have measurable, sustained and positive effects on many health problems, including breast cancer. Other problems positively impacted include high blood pressure, addictions, chronic pain, fatigue, headaches, sleep disturbances, anxiety and depression.

Two recent studies:

1) A group of stage I to III breast cancer patients experiencing clinically meaningful distress who experienced an MBSR (mindfulness based stress reduction) intervention (involving mindfulness meditation and gentle yoga) showed significantly more improvement in stress symptoms, quality of life and social support than those who participated in a supportive expressive therapy (SET) group and those in a 1-day didactic stress management workshop, used as a control group. Cortisol (stress hormone) levels were also significantly impacted in a positive direction in both the MBSR group and the SET group, but not in the control group.

Reference: Carlson LE, et al. Randomized controlled trial of mindfulness-based cancer recovery versus supportive expressive group therapy for distressed survivors of breast cancer (MINDSET). J Clin Oncol, pub ahead of print, Aug 5, 2013 as 10.1200/JCO.2012.47.5210.

2) Mood, quality of life and well-being was better in patients with stage 0 to III breast cancer during and following their participation in an MBSR program than in a comparable group that received standard care. These results persisted three months later. This suggests that MBSR may help alleviate long-term emotional and physical side effects of breast cancer treatments, including endocrine treatments.

Reference: Hoffman CJ, et al. Effectiveness of mindfulness-based stress reduction in mood, breast- and endocrine-related quality of life, and well-being in stage 0 to III breast cancer: a randomized, controlled trial. J Clin Oncol. Apr 20;30(12):1335-42, 2012.

Meditation is a general term for the many ways to deliberately focus one's attention, for the purpose of achieving a deeply relaxed state of being, or inner peace.

Mindfulness is the conscious awareness of one's moment-to-moment experience in a non-judgmental manner.



Resources for Meditation and Mindfulness Training:

Kabat-Zinn, Jon. Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain and Illness. Delacorte, NY. 1990.

www.getsomeheadspace.com

www.wildmind.org

www.atlantamindfulness.org