**General Information**

Instructor: Darlene Taylor

Email: [darlenetaylor1@student.kaplan.edu](mailto:darlenetaylor1@student.kaplan.edu)

Course Meeting: TBD

Course Credit: TBD

**Course Description**

This course is an introduction to the complementary and alternative medicine modality of meditation. It is a 90-minute segment of a three part series entitled “Self-care through Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) Modalities.” In this course, participants will receive an introduction to meditation’s definition, history, benefits, research, forms, professional requirements, and safety precautions. The course will culminate with a practical exercise where students will perform a five minute body scan.

**Course Prerequisites**

None

**Course Objectives**

1. To understand the definition and history of meditation.
2. To understand the benefits, research and evidence supporting meditation.
3. To learn the major forms and safety precautions of meditation.
4. To identify professional requirements and community resources available in the local area.
5. To develop the confidence to introduce meditation into your self-care regime.

**Course Timeline**

Min Activity

05 Introduction to CAM/Learning Outcomes

05 Definition and History of Meditation

10 [Video](https://youtu.be/CmhkmLFc74E) and brief discussion (4:05)

05 Benefits of Meditation

10 [Video](https://youtu.be/7mcx3kAEY-U) and brief discussion (5:20)

05 Research and evidence

10 Break

05 Forms of Meditation

10 [Video](https://youtu.be/Jz8YjnHjSe0) and brief discussion (2:00)

05 Professional Requirements and community resources

05 Safety Precautions

10 [Video](https://youtu.be/tsfjUN5Bre8) on mindful meditation and discussion (6:37)

05 Summary / Conclusion

**90 Total Minute**

**Introduction:**

Hello. I’m Darlene Taylor, a wellness coach at Wellness Works, an online business created to help its clients develop personalized plans to obtain optimal holistic wellness in the physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual arenas. Our philosophy is simple, "Simple Changes Matter."  
  
This lesson will introduce the benefits of meditation and how you can make it an integral part of your daily life. Meditation is a complementary, alternative, and integrative medicine modality that can be used to enhance your health. It can be an adjunct to conventional medical treatment for pain management. It can be an alternative preventive measure to control stress and anxiety. It is a great modality for most people, regardless of age. Yes, even your children can learn meditation. And many schools are already teaching it to America’s youth.

**History and Definition of Meditation**

Meditation has a rich and ancient history. No one knows when the practice started; however, archeologist exploring the Indus Valley found ancient wall art of people meditating that dates back to 5,000 to 3,500 BCE. (Puff, 2013)

Hindu holy books documented meditation around 1,500 BCE. It gained in popularity as a Buddhist spiritual practice around 500-600 BCE. Then, spread throughout the world and was documented in Greek text by 20 BCE. Most of the world’s great religions (Islam, Judaism, and Christianity) have adopted some form of meditation. Then, in 1927, the “Tibetan Book of the Dead” was published and re-introduced the Western world to meditation.

In 1979, the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program was established in the United States. (Chow, 2015) MBSR is a mindfulness program designed to help patients with stress, anxiety, depression or chronic pain. It is important to note that the western world’s practice of meditation is more secular-based than religious-based.

The 2012 National Health Interview Survey, which interviewed between 35,00 and 40,000 US households, found that 18 million people (8%) of US adults and 927,000 (1.6%) of US children practice meditation. (NCCIH, n.d.)

**What is meditation?**

It is a self-direct, mind-body practice that the Psychology Dictionary (Pam MS, n.d.) defines as “an exercise during which the individual enters an extended state of contemplation and reflection over a specific subject or their general existence, sometimes with a view to attain a differing state of consciousness.”

The Free Dictionary (n.d.) goes into additional details by say, “Meditation is a practice of concentrated focus upon a sound, object, visualization, the breath, movement, or attention itself in order to increase awareness of the present moment, reduce stress, promote relaxation, and enhance personal and spiritual growth.”

Mind-body refers to the fact that meditation impacts both the mind and the body. It also relates to the fact that what we do with one has a direct impact on the other.

Experts in the mind/body connection believe that the body responds positively and negatively to the way one feels. “Poor emotional health can weaken your body's immune system, making you more likely to get colds and other infections during emotionally difficult times.” (Family Doctor, 2016)

They are inseparable. Let’s take a moment and test that theory. Everyone, look at your neighbor. Okay, when I say go, smile and hold it until I tell you to stop. Ready, go! (Wait 30 seconds, then say stop) Now most of you should be feeling a higher state of happiness, because studies have shown that the act of seeing a smiling face (body) triggers past happy thoughts (mind); thereby, making us feel better. (Lamia, 2014)

**(See** [**video**](https://youtu.be/CmhkmLFc74E) **and discuss)**

* So, was it hard to stop thinking for 10 seconds?
* Raise your hand if you got distracted?
* What kinds of thoughts were you having?

**Benefits of Meditation**

As the video asserts, there are many benefits to meditation to include:

* Increases in positive emotions, compassion, immune function, control, and focus
* Decreases in stress, anxiety, pain, and depression.

But various research studies (Dienstmann, n.d.) reveal meditation has both psychological and physiological benefits:

* Enhance self-esteem and acceptance
* Improve resilience
* Increase optimism
* Helps control emotional eating or smoking
* Improves social connections
* Enhances mood
* Improves decision making and problem solving
* Increase longevity
* Helps prevent arthritis, fibromyalgia
* Reduces blood pressure
* Improves cardiovascular disease

**(See** [**video**](https://youtu.be/7mcx3kAEY-U) **and discuss)**

Russell Simons brings up a great point when he says, “There is no happiness in the future or the past…only in the present” What does that mean to you?

Meditation generates the relaxation response, which is the opposite of the flight or fight. What is the flight or fight response?

It is also called the acute stress response. It is the body’s physiological and psychological reaction to threat, real or imagined. It is a protection mechanism designed to ensure your safety. When faced with a threat, your sympathetic nervous system is activated by hormones. It directs the adrenal glands to release catecholamines, which result in an increased heart rate, rise in blood pressure and breathing. This gives you the speed and/or power (strength) to deal with the threat.

If it is a natural defense mechanism, why is it a problem? (Discuss and give examples)

**Research and evidence**

A study conducted in Belgium of 400 students (13-20 years old) found that following an in-class mindful meditation program reduced depression, anxiety, and stress for six months. (Leuven, 2013)

Researchers at John Hopkins University reviewed published clinical trials and found moderate evidence that mindfulness meditation alleviates pain, anxiety and depression—the latter two to a similar degree as antidepressant drug therapy. (Moyer, 2014)

A study of 22 participants with generalized anxiety disorder or panic disorder revealed that “A group mindfulness meditation training program can effectively reduce symptoms of anxiety and panic and can help maintain these reductions in patients with generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, or panic disorder with agoraphobia.” (AJP, 1992)

Researchers at UCLA’s Laboratory of Neuro Imagining compared 50 meditator’s brain scans to 50 control subject who didn’t meditate and found that long term meditators have larger amounts of gyrification than people who don’t meditate. This reveals the meditation strengthens the brain. (Wheeler, 2012)

Researchers at the University of Montreal exposed 13 Zen masters and 13 comparable non-practitioners to equal degrees of painful heat while measuring their brain activity. They found that the meditators reported less pain even though the MRI did not reveal less pain. (Orme-Johnson, 2006)

**(Break)**

**(See** [**video**](https://youtu.be/Jz8YjnHjSe0) **and discuss)**

**Types and Forms of Meditation**

There are two types of meditation. Concentrative which is fixed attentiveness. The meditator focuses his or her attention on an object such as a mantra. When he or she comes distracted they gently bring themselves back to the mantra or focal point. Contemplative meditation is where you allow thoughts to come and go without thinking, interpreting, judging or evaluating.

There are various forms of meditation practiced throughout the world. I read somewhere that there are over 23 forms. However, most have four things in common: quiet location, comfortable positions, focus, and an open attitude. (NCCIH, 2016) Some of the most popular forms are

Transcendental is a structured, mantra-based technique. TM encourages silencing the inner mind through the silent repetition of a mantra.

Vipassana is a traditional Buddhist meditation that focuses on nose breathing. The word literally means “to see things as they really are,” so one aspect of this meditation technique to acknowledge thoughts as they come.

Zen (Zazen) is a seated meditation. Like vipassana, the meditation encourages one to acknowledge thoughts, not pass judgement on the thought and let it leave. However, zen focuses on belly breathing.

“Mindfulness meditation is the umbrella term for the category of techniques used to create awareness and insight by practicing focused attention, observing, and accepting all that arises without judgment. Although the origins of mindfulness meditation come from Buddhist teachings—predominantly Vipassana meditation, but also incorporates philosophies and practices from other Buddhist traditions—the style and way it’s taught is nonsectarian and appeals to people from many different religions and cultures. Its simple nature and open philosophy has made it the most popular meditation technique in the West.” (Eisler, 2015)

**Professional Requirements and community resources**

There is no professional requirement to teach meditation; however, one can obtain a certifications in MBSR through the Center for Mindfulness at the University of Massachusetts. You can learn the basic on your own, but having a teacher would be helpful in the learning process.

Here in San Antonio there are numerous meditation groups that one can find on Meetup to include:

* H.E.A.L.T.H. Natural Solutions, 7300 Blanco Rd, Suite 704, San Antonio, TX 78216,   
  Phone: 210.880.4321
* Shambhala Meditation Center
* The Diamond Way Buddhist Center of San Antonio
* [It's Alive: Zen Meditation](https://www.facebook.com/ItsAliveZen/?hc_ref=PAGES_TIMELINE&fref=nf)
* San Antonio Zen Center
* YouTube Videos
  + How to Meditate - Meditation for Beginners - Day 1 <https://youtu.be/n4fRZU5oEMI>
  + Counting Meditation - Simple Breathing Meditation - Day 2
  + https://youtu.be/ppaZpkBenmQ

**Safety and Self-meditation**

Anyone can participate in meditation. People who have a problem sitting in the lotus position can sit comfortably in a chair. People with mental health problems should consult with their physician.

Don’t drive while performing meditation.

**(See** [**video**](https://youtu.be/tsfjUN5Bre8) **on mindful meditation and discuss)**

* What did you feel?
* What did you hear?
* How do you feel now?

**Summary / Conclusion**

So today we’ve talked about the origins of meditation, the benefits of meditation, research and evidence, types of meditation, professional requirements, and safety precautions. We’ve also conducted a 5 minute guided body scan. I hope that you’ve learned that meditation can become an integral part of your life. It’s an easy way to relieve life’s stressors.

Next week, I will continue this this seminar series with a 90-minute discussion on tai chi. See you all then. And remember…."Simple Changes Matter."

# References

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Dienstmann, G. (n.d.). *Scientific Benefits of Meditation.* Retrieved from Live and Dare: http://liveanddare.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Benefits-of-Meditation-Infographic.png

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**90 Total Minutes**

**Local Resources (San Antonio)**

Meditation Meetups in San Antonio, https://www.meetup.com/topics/meditation/us/tx/san\_antonio/

Deep Meditation Center, 4035 Naco Perrin Blvd Ste.203B, San Antonio, Texas 78217

Shambhala Meditation Center of San Antonio, [257 E Hildebrand, San Antonio, TX 78212](https://www.bing.com/local?lid=YN855x14806136&id=YN855x14806136&q=Shambhala+Meditation+Center+of+San+Antonio&name=Shambhala+Meditation+Center+of+San+Antonio&cp=29.4666919708252%7e-98.4895782470703&ppois=29.4666919708252_-98.4895782470703_Shambhala+Meditation+Center+of+San+Antonio&FORM=SNAPST)

**Online Resources**

Dobrowolski, Patti, *Best Ted Talk 2015, Draw Your Future- Take Control of your Life*, <https://youtu.be/4vl6wCiUZYc>

The 30-day Meditation Challenge for Beginners

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLF78_4TwdUj-XGrceHHlv2Rhz_aKB6wYs>

Guided Meditation,

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLF78_4TwdUj-4ShqhY-oEWqh12OrUNigi>

**Recommended Reading**

Chodron, Pema. (2013) How to Meditate: A Practical Guide to Making Friends with your Mind. Sounds True

Kornfield, Jack, (2008) *Meditation for Beginners*, Sounds True

Salzberg, Sharon. (2010) *Real Happiness: The Power of Meditation: A 28-day Program*, Workman Publishing Company