



Sharpen up your ^{act} with meditation

Just a few minutes practice each day can revolutionise your life, inside and out, says **Zoe Strimpel**

ONCE considered the domain of hippies and devoted Buddhists, meditation has entered the mainstream, and – odd as it sounds – more and more City workers are turning to it. Not because they've all suddenly developed a taste for India, chilling out and chanting "ommm", but because the benefits of meditation on over-stressed minds are finally being acknowledged.

"Professionals are more open to meditation now," says Dr Jo Perkins, founder of Orbit Consulting, a City coaching and psychology practice. "They are looking for more tools to help themselves. I'm definitely seeing an increase in anxiety, and people are made very uncomfortable by that, so they are looking for ways to reduce it."

OBVIOUS BENEFITS

Meditation doesn't have to be spiritual – just quietly breathing is a basic form. Even so, it can play a key role in busy professional lives and for those balancing a vast array of competing stresses.

"Your brain is like a computer," says Perkins. "It never switches off, even when you're asleep, so we need a mechanism to allow us to quiet our mind and give it some peace. This is how we can recharge."

Perkins frequently recommends meditation to her clients, and says there are obvious benefits. Those who meditate in the morning, even for five minutes, have more clarity of thinking throughout the day, and a centred quality to them. "It's like cleaning out old cupboards, starting afresh," she says. "People who meditate in the morning come in and approach their workload with a clear head, rather than in

a scatter-brained, 'must-do-everything-at-once' type of way."

Another major gain from the practice is self-awareness, both mental and physical, since meditation is all about being in the moment. Most of us are remarkably cut off from the present – ask someone (or yourself) how they're feeling and the chances are the answer will be an unthinking "fine," with no real idea of how they feel, emotionally or physically. We're lost in thoughts about yesterday or tomorrow, to the point that we might miss a pain in our chest, or a sore leg, or a tense back, or a sad feeling. Meditation isn't easy – it takes discipline and a little time, and can seem boring or futile at first. Consequently people tend to give up before seeing results, or say they haven't got time for it. "But if you keep it up, it will pay dividends, can aid performance, make you feel energised and lower your heart rate by pulling more oxygen into the system," says Perkins.

POSITIVE OUTCOME

Once you've got the hang of it, a major advantage is to be able to use it in the middle of the day. If you've got 10 different things on at once and are feeling frazzled, it's a way to cut through it all with a slice of quiet, especially when you don't have time for a massage or a nap.

You can use meditation in different ways. One that is highly relevant for professionals that have to perform in stressful situations is visualisation. Once in your deep relaxation mode, you can imagine a range of scenarios that unfold as you'd like them to. You can imagine yourself as a successful person, doing well in a presen-

tation, with people congratulating you afterwards. It's not about fantasy, but about seeing yourself as you really are, doing well. Such visualisations have been shown to have a positive effect on behaviour – for example, on the day of the presentation that you've visualised, you may take extra care to dress meticulously. You'll also exude confidence. It's for this reason that visualisation is a favoured technique in the sports world, to stoke confidence and get results. "If you imagine yourself as a successful individual, ringing people up, creating business, you're more likely to get on the phone and do it, because you've set up an emotional connection with the positive outcome," says Perkins.

Connecting the mind and body in other ways can help stressed City workers to focus and perform better too. Yoga has many advantages – "It's great for busy professionals because it's not adrenalising, like the treadmill or pumping weights," says Perkins. "It's much more relaxing. There's also the benefit of stretching yourself out at the end of the day, releasing the tension that has built up in your neck and back." Another upside is that attending a pre-booked yoga class is a commitment to yourself, to taking time for something personal, even if that means leaving the office early. Add in the fact that most yoga studios are oases of peace and quiet, and you've got a much more wholesome treat for your body and mind than going to the pub for a few pints.

then sign up for a course.

Picture:
JUPITER

CENTRE MIND AND BODY | WHERE TO GO

Meditate in London has a vast range of drop-in classes, courses, retreats and events throughout the city. Look at the website www.meditateinlondon.org.uk to find one closest to you – the evening classes start at 7 or 7:30 and last for an hour and a half and cost £8 per session.

London Meditation Centre, based in Notting Hill, teaches Vedic Meditation (sometimes referred to as transcendental meditation), which settles and calms thinking. Attend an introductory talk,

www.londonmeditationcentre.com
The London Shambhala Meditation Centre offers meditation instruction and weekend and weekday courses in meditation and Buddhism for free. The Centre is part of an international community teaching Buddhist spirituality, so has a religious element, but it's not in any way pushy. www.shambhala.org.uk

The London Buddhist Centre offers classes in Bethnal Green, including free weekday lunchtime drop-ins. It teaches

two Buddhist meditation practices; the Mindfulness of Breathing, which enhances awareness and peace of mind, and the Metta Bhavana, the development of loving-kindness. www.lbc.org.uk

Yoga: there is a bewildering choice, and many yoga studios offer meditation classes too. Among our favourites are Triyoga (www.triyoga.co.uk); Alchemy (www.alchemythecentre.co.uk) and The Bishopsgate Institute (www.bishopsgate.org.uk).

OUT OF OFFICE | BY ZOE STRIMPEL



Cocktail Heaven at the Sanderson's Blue Bar.

MIXOLOGY LESSONS AT SANDERSON

Anyone interested in improving their cocktail-making skills should try a Cocktail Heaven training session at the super-glam Purple Bar at the Sanderson and the Light Bar at St Martins Lane Hotel. Over two hours, a bartender will teach you how to make cocktails and use professional bar equipment, before leaving you to replicate three cocktails. From 16 Apr, £80 per person, minimum eight people, tel: 020 7300 1496, www.sandersonlondon.com

MEN'S FACIALS AT USHVANI

This facial has been created "to combat the strains that face the busy 21st century metropolitan man." If that sounds like you, then you'll enjoy the massage for puffy, tired eyes and the pressure point stimulation to relieve tension from clenching the jaw. A rice and hibiscus scrub for the face and a scalp massage both increase circulation and calm the mind. £130 for 105 mins at Ushvani, 1 Cadogan Gardens, SW3 2RJ, Tel: 020 7730 2888, www.ushvani.com

LEGAL AND PUBLIC NOTICES

ASVEX LIMITED t/a FRANCO Registered No. 04609259

Notice is hereby given pursuant to Section 98 of the Insolvency Act 1986 that a Meeting of the Creditors of the above-named company will be held at 11.00 am on 06/04/2009 at The Grange 100 High Street, London N14 6TB for the purposes mentioned in Sections 99 to 101 of the said Act. Creditors wishing to vote at the Meeting must (unless they are individual creditors attending in person) ensure their proxies are received at the offices of Bond Partners LLP, The Grange 100 High Street, London N14 6TB by no later than midday on the business day preceding that of the Meeting of Creditors, together with a statement of the amount claimed. A list of names and addresses of the company's creditors may be inspected free of charge at the offices of Bond Partners LLP, The Grange 100 High Street, London N14 6TB, between 10.00 am and 4.00 pm on the two business days preceding the meeting.
Dated this 24/03/2009
A EMRAL Director 7253906

SATELLITE MARKETING CONSULTANTS LIMITED (In Liquidation)

Notice is hereby given pursuant to Rule 4.106 of the Insolvency Rules 1986 that Stephen Franklin FIPA MABRP of Panos Ellades, Franklin & Co., 6th Floor 2 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NW was appointed Liquidator of the above-named Company on 23/03/2009 by Members and Creditors.
Dated: 23/03/2009
STEPHEN FRANKLIN, Liquidator 7253709