

Why Practice the Meditation Exercise

By Roland Trujillo

Problems begin on the outside but then they get on the inside. This is our biggest challenge—keeping it all outside.

If we don't, we end up struggling with troubling memories, negative emotions, and terrible doubts. Somehow our work, our bills, our family problems, and daily irritations and injustices get inside, where they gnaw at us and make us upset until we feel like we're in a pressure cooker. Finally, we might explode in anger and upset at others. This temporarily relieves the pressure, but it's a terrible injustice to others who are on the receiving end. Sadly, it's most often our children or loved ones who bear the brunt of our pent up hostility.

When we allow others to get to us, they get inside us and then torment us from their new home inside. Those who get to us often walk away feeling better, while we feel worse. We then bring the burden they laid on us (often an injustice) and then dump on our family. This is also an injustice.

In the same way that we let other's cruelty and injustice get inside us by our over-reaction, we also let problems and other pressures get inside us via the same mechanism.

For example, many people bring their work home with them in their head. They can't get their work off their mind. They are home in the body, but they are lost in thinking and basically unavailable for their loved ones. Similarly, bills, noisy neighbors, repairs, health problems, or

even negative things we see or hear on the news get inside and make us preoccupied.

All of the outside things that leak inside cause us to dwell on them morbidly. Not only do daily upsets build internal pressure but they grab our attention and play upon the screen of our imagination. This ruins our precious daily lives. We forget to stop and smell the roses. We miss or only half notice many beautiful special moments our kids or spouse bring to us. Unable to stop the mental squirrel cage of thinking, we ignore or give short shrift to our loved ones. They feel it and resent us.

We become so unaware that we make mistakes: upsetting our kids, hurting our spouse, driving right past the freeway exit or becoming accident prone, because we are lost in thought. These thoughts also tend to draw and maintain negative emotions, as we sit brooding and reliving the past and worrying about the future. These negative emotions lead to health problems. And soon we also have this to worry about.

This is the vicious cycle of over-reacting, letting outside incidents get inside, losing ourselves in past and future, and dwelling morbidly and negatively in a cesspool of thought and emotion.

This vicious cycle is stopped by learning the secret of not reacting. This secret is learned in the stress reduction meditation exercise that we teach at the Center for Common Sense Counseling. By learning how not

to react at the moment of temptation, we thus remain calm. The outside does not get inside and our emotions remain calm.

By not becoming angry or upset, there are no emotions to feed the old traumatic memories, and we remain free to deal reasonably, patiently and with wisdom to each new moment. We become there for our family, and we have presence of mind to deal with new trials and tribulations.

Many other emotions such as fear, anxiety, and depression arise from having failed in the past, which makes us afraid of failing again and even afraid of life in general. Another dangerous emotion is that of resentment, which occurs when we see that we are failing. We resent seeing another failing on our part. And we resent being observed in the act of failing by others or by our conscience. We blame others, and when that doesn't work, we turn our resentment and blame on ourselves.

By practicing the meditation exercise, we can gain the presence of mind to stand back and observe the moment, see what is needed, and respond with reason and patience instead of with upset or resentment.

The triumph of responding properly and the delight of gaining understanding about ourselves and others lead to a procession of joys. Defeat turns to victory and fear to a new zest for life.