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I am Healed ---Introducing the first of our Health & Wellbeing Experts: Sarah Fletcher from Quiet Mind Meditation.

Running & Meditation --- Opposites?

Neuroscience has found that people who meditate shift their brain activity from the right frontal cortex (that part of the brain that is prone to stress) to the left frontal cortex (which makes a person happier and calmer). That sounds like a good enough reason to meditate. But if you have a passion for running, or participate in any sport requiring endurance and high level focus, then consider these interesting facts about meditation:



1. Helps you maintain focus, so when you are training you can actually get the most out of our session by not being distracted with everyday worries about work and family. Long lasting focus and concentration is what meditation is all about.
2. You develop an ability to balance effortless relaxation and applied focus, placing our awareness right in the 'present moment' or 'the zone'. Getting quickly into 'the zone' and staying there, quiets the mind, so our effort and our body become more efficient.
3. Researchers in Norway have reported that sportsmen who use meditation after tough training session reduce their production of lactate – that ache-inducing by-product of anaerobic exercise – and recover their fitness levels faster.
4. When mindful of the body we develop a greater awareness of the mind-body connection, gaining a deeper understanding of how we are performing, and also developing our spatial awareness, pain management and overall mental endurance.
5. Muscles grow and get stronger when well rested. A period of meditation post training allows a much deeper type of rest where the body can repair and the mind refresh.

6. "When mindfulness is applied to sports, it brings the mind and the body into a kind of unity" says Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D., professor of medicine emeritus at the University of Massachusetts Medical School and avid runner. Paying attention to the feeling and movement of the breath, the inhalation and exhalation, can bring a sense of centered peaceful awareness. "Running is breath by breath, footfall by footfall, moment by moment".
7. Meditation lowers oxygen consumption, increases blood flow, decreases muscle tension and increases serotonin production (which influences our mood and behaviour).

Running is quite a repetitive activity, one that requires discipline and focus ..qualities that are also found in meditation. So as a runner you may already have the natural inclination and the inherent skill required to start a meditation practice.

A simple body awareness meditation exercise can assist us in understanding the process of relaxation, and provides us with a tool to relax our muscles whenever we need to. A short body awareness exercise prior to a run (and afterwards for recuperation) can greatly enhance our sense of mind-body connection, so that we become more fully engaged with what the body is doing, how it is performing, and understanding its real limits.



Quiet Mind Meditation

Sarah Fletcher

For more information regarding the above article or to contact Sarah visit **www.quietmind.com.au**