

[IMAGE]

Meditation, Not Medication for Depression

By Editorial Staff

The ancient art of meditation is known to soothe the proverbial savage beast and take you to a place of inner peace and tranquility. No wonder research suggests meditation is as effective as commonly prescribed (and infinitely more dangerous) antidepressant medications.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, major depressive disorder is the leading cause of disability among U.S. teens and adults (15-44 years of age) and affects approximately 14.8 million adults ages 18 and older in any given year. Of the 33,000-plus Americans who commit suicide annually, more than 90 percent have a diagnosable mental disorder, most commonly a depressive disorder or substance abuse disorder. Pretty depressing statistics, to say the least.

Antidepressants have been the mainstay treatment for depression, an approach that has garnered significant criticism over the years from those who believe the drugs are widely overprescribed and unsafe. For example, in some cases, antidepressants appear to actually increase the risk of suicidal thoughts and/or behaviors; certainly not a desired consequence for anyone, but particularly for someone suffering from depression.

meditation - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Now for some good news: Research is suggesting alternative treatments may be as effective as - and definitely safer than - antidepressant medications. Case in point: a study published in the *Archives of General Psychiatry* that suggests meditation benefits depression patients in remission from the disorder. In the study, patients who learned how to meditate 40 minutes a day instead of taking antidepressant medication were as likely to avoid a relapse as patients taking antidepressants or a placebo (an inactive pill patients believed contained medication to help them control their depression symptoms).

Another possible benefit of meditation: It may provide a sense of empowerment and personal responsibility, building self-esteem. After all, knowing you have at least some control over your depression and can effectively protect yourself against a relapse - without having to rely on drugs and their inherent potential health risks - might well be a mood elevator in and of itself. Considering how low depression can take you,

anything that lifts you up, even a bit, has to be encouraging.

Keep in mind that depression, particularly major depressive disorder, goes far beyond "feeling blue"; symptoms can severely impact home, school and work life. For additional information about depression including the warning signs, visit the NIMH Web site at www.nimh.nih.gov/health/index.shtml.

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