

# UVM ScholarWorks

## Meditation for Depression and Anxiety

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Authors	Knapp, Max
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### FOR MORE INFORMATION

To find health information, or for convenient and secure access to your medical record through MyHealth Online, please visit [UVMHealth.org](http://UVMHealth.org) or call us at **(802) 847-0000**.

### DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY MEDICINE

235 Rowell  
106 Carrigan Drive  
Burlington VT 05405

### HOURS

Monday – Friday  
8:00 am – 5:00 pm

### PHONE

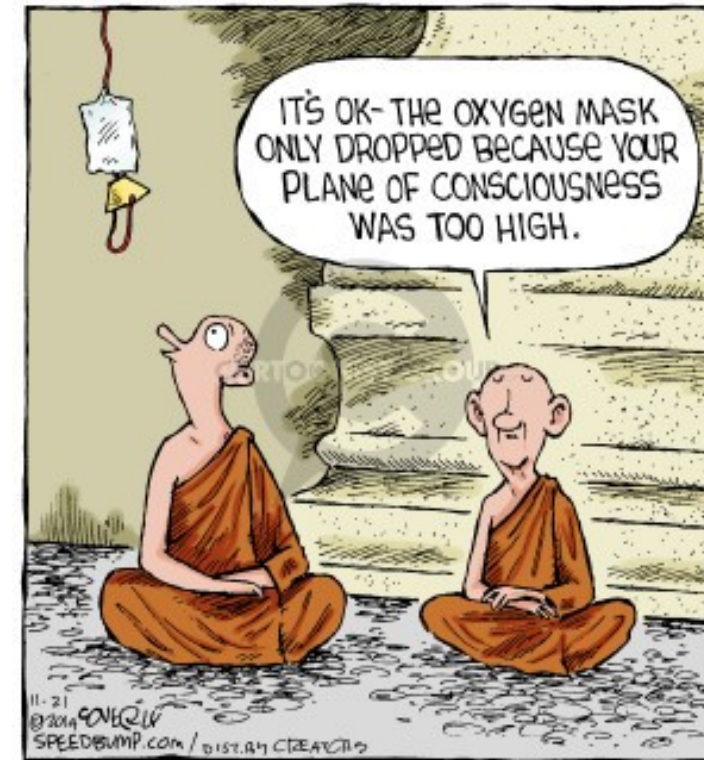
(802) 656-4330

### FAX

(802) 656-3353

Meditation is an effective treatment for many mental health conditions. This pamphlet contains some basic information to help you start a mindfulness practice.

There are many active meditation communities in Chittenden County. Check online if you want community support.



# Meditation

Evidence-based Treatment for Depression and  
Anxiety



[UVMHealth.org/MedicalGroup](http://UVMHealth.org/MedicalGroup)

THE  
University of Vermont  
HEALTH NETWORK

Medical Group



## Why Meditate?

### WHY MEDITATION?

Mental health was the top priority identified in UVM Medical Center's 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment. Depression affects 22% of Vermonters; 432 emergency department visits in 2017 were for anxiety symptoms. If you've been struggling with your mental health, you're not alone. This pamphlet is a starting point on incorporating mindfulness meditation into your life.

Mindfulness meditation is an evidence based treatment for anxiety, depression, and even chronic pain. Some evidence suggests that it can reduce blood pressure and blood sugar in patients with type 2 diabetes. It offers these benefits with no side effects, with as little as 10 minutes a day.

This pamphlet is not a substitute for talking to your doctor. Medication and psychiatric care may be a part of your care plan as well.

### BEGINNER EXERCISE

*Body scan:*

1. Sit comfortably. Your position should be relaxed, but alert. Set a timer if you like.
2. Take a few deep breaths. Allow the eyes to close. Notice whatever sounds are coming to you. Notice smells. Notice the feeling of your weight pressing against your seat.
3. Gently focus on the top of your head. Notice any sensations you have there. Slowly scan down, noticing your eyes, ears, nose, jaw. The order is less important than moving slowly and deliberately.
4. Continue scanning downward through the rest of your body. When you find yourself distracted, return to wherever you left off.
5. When you're ready to move on, take a few deep breaths and notice how you feel.

### FOLLOW UP

Want more? Try ending with either of these exercises:

- Imagine a warm, gentle light shining onto the back of your neck. While using your breath to help you stay present, watch as the light slowly fills you, driving stress out of your muscles.
- Focus on the breath. When a distraction comes, take note of whether you've been distracted by a thought or a feeling. Don't analyze deeply, just label and move back to the breath.

### ADVICE

There are many ways to meditate. There are two key components of mindfulness meditation: anchoring focus in the current moment, and cultivation of a non-judgmental mindset.

- **It's normal to get distracted.** When you realize you're distracted, simply move your focus back to the breath or your exercise. Don't linger on it or get frustrated.
- **Find a community.** Especially while starting, it can be helpful to have other people around to help guide meditation. Look online for communities in your area.
- **All of the techniques here are guidelines, not rules.** As you get more comfortable, feel free to adapt these exercises or find other resources on meditation.

References:

Goyal M, Singh S, Sibinga EMS, et al. Meditation Programs for Psychological Stress and Well-being: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. *JAMA Intern Med.* 2014

Lee SH et al. Brain education-based meditation for patients with hypertension and/or type 2 diabetes: A pilot randomized controlled trial. *MEDLINE* 2019

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