Benefits of Meditation

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Bipolar and Meditation

It may seem hard to use meditation to better manage your bipolar disorder- during a manic episode you may feel too nervous and agitated to stay still, with your eyes closed and meditate. During a depressive episode, you experience low mood, will sleep more, and try to avoid doing anything. Yet, there are many benefits of meditation and this practice can help you improve your symptoms if you give it a chance. Let's see why and how you can start incorporating mindfulness in your life today.

Mindfulness is described as a "mental state of heightened awareness, free of distraction and conductive to deliberate thought and action". By practicing, you would feel less depressed, stressed and improve your focus and attention, indicate scientists. Simply put, mindfulness re-wires your brain, enhances the connection between neurons (brain cells). This process is important, as our feelings and behaviors are the result of a complex interaction between genes and the environment (which includes physical and emotional stressors). The way you work with your mind affects your "biological clock" very much like a prescription drug and can affect your brain in positive or negative ways

Research

A growing evidence of scientific studies confirms the benefits of meditation for a variety of health conditions. For example, a 2008 study featured in the "Journal Affective Disorders" evaluated how mindfulness-based cognitive therapy works for bipolar disorder. The results: the participants experienced immediate results in improving anxiety symptoms. Furthermore, the subjects showed improvement in residual symptoms of depression.

Mindfulness in 6 easy steps

1. **Do one thing at a time, avoid multi-tasking.** If you eat, pay attention to what you eat. If you talk on the phone, pay attention to what that person have to say, rather than watch TV or clean dishes.
2. **When you perform a task, do it slowly and make your actions deliberate**. Avoid rushing and focus on that task. You can start using this step when eating: chew well and savor each bite (you will also notice that you eat less, and enjoy your food more). Next, look at your life , slow down and savor each and every movement, using all your senses (i.e. pay attention to smell, touch, how you feel)

3. **Less is more.** Doing a thing slowly means it will take you more time to complete it, and with more concentration. Rather than rushing to do many things each day, learn how to let go unnecessary or less important tasks, and focus on fewer tasks and what is really important to you. Keep a little gap between performing two tasks, don't schedule one after another. Leaving some room between two tasks will make you feel more relaxed.
4. **Add the 5 minute "do nothing" to your daily routine**. Just stay quiet for five minutes and become aware of your thoughts. Pay attention to your breathing and get comfortable with silence and stillness.
5. **The time is now. Focus on the present.** When you worry, you either live in the past (or think about

unhappy situations), or your project negative feelings into the future. When you talk to a person, again, be in the present and really listen and have fun spending time with him/her. Don’t think about what you have to say or do next.

6. **Turn some activities into meditation**. Maybe you don’t enjoy cleaning or cooking. Well, you can start meditating when doing such tasks. Bring your attention and the whole mind while cleaning, and do it slowly and completely. As you practice, it will become easier.