



Dear Robin,

As a lifelong meditator, I love to hear people's experiences of how meditation has helped them. Here are a few such stories which, taken together, show a broad spectrum of benefits that meditation can bring.

Recently I was talking with a friend, the mother of three children under the age of six, who has begun meditating during the past year. She told me, "Meditation is helping me be a better parent. I'm much calmer when dealing with my three rambunctious kids. I find I'm not reacting as much as I used to, but stay relaxed no matter what's going on. And I'm able to be stronger in myself and not waver when disciplining them or setting boundaries. All this is really having a positive effect on my kids, as well."

Last year a young doctor from Delhi told us about the tremendous challenges he and his hospital staff faced during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic in India: "At a certain point, we had run out of all supplies—medicine, oxygen, and hospital beds—and were even putting critically ill patients on the floor in the hallways. All we could essentially do was to comfort people as they died.

"One day, after working long hours and witnessing many deaths, I was returning home filled with exhaustion and despair. 'I can't go on like this,' I thought to myself.

"Then I saw a poster announcing a meditation class at an Ananda center near my apartment. I don't know why, but I signed up and began learning the techniques. Almost immediately, I started to feel inwardly strengthened and renewed. I know it was meditation that gave me the ability to keep going during those difficult times. I've continued with my practice and recently received Kriya initiation."

Once one of Ananda's senior teachers in India was giving an introductory talk for a course on meditation. After he had finished speaking, the attendees asked a lot of perceptive, interested questions. Then one man stood up, and rather defiantly asked, "You've been meditating for many years. Do you have any spiritual powers?"

The teacher paused, then replied quietly, “No, I can’t say that I have any powers.” A general sigh of disappointment could be heard throughout the room.

Then he continued, “Oh, but, I do have one: I have the power to be happy at will.” Another sigh moved through the audience, this time one of appreciation. The teacher concluded with a twinkle in his eye: “I don’t always use this power, but it’s there if I so choose.” Almost all of those present signed up for the course.



In *Autobiography of a Yogi*, after his experience in cosmic consciousness, Yoganandaji asked his guru, Sri Yukteswar, “When shall I find God?”

Sri Yukteswar replied, “You have found Him.”

“Oh no, sir, I don’t think so!”

Sri Yukteswar went on to say, “I see that you are imagining that the possession of miraculous powers is knowledge of God. One might have the whole universe, and find the Lord elusive still! Spiritual advancement is not measured by one’s outward powers, but only by the depth of his bliss in meditation.

“*Ever-new Joy is God*. He is inexhaustible; as you continue your meditations during the years, He will beguile you with an infinite ingenuity.”

The benefits of meditation are there to be had by everyone: to deal better with life’s demands and to help others around us; to find inner strength and balance when

faced with seemingly overwhelming tests; to discover one's own ability to be happy under all circumstances; and to find the ever-new joy of God. It's our job to keep meditating even when our energy flags, or when we begin to wonder if we're making any spiritual progress.

Yoganandaji, Swami Kriyananda wrote, would often tell his disciples: "If you plant a seed, then keep digging it up to see how it is doing, it will never be able to grow. You must leave it in the ground, and water it daily; then it will surely grow in its own time. So also with the path to God: Plant the seed of divine aspiration; don't dig it up constantly to see how it is doing, but water it daily with meditation and with divine actions. See also that you surround it with a protective hedge of good company. In time, your little seed will grow into a mighty tree of Self-realization, affording shade and shelter to every passing wayfarer."

In joyful friendship,

Nayaswami Devi

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