

CREATING *mental well-being*

— FOR ONE AND ALL —



WORLD HEALTH DAY
7 APRIL 2017



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Dear friends,

Our human system has a very wonderful characteristic when it comes to observing and looking after our health – when nothing is wrong, we remain carefree and oblivious to our health, as our heart does not give us any signals. But when something is wrong it definitely lets us know – as long as we listen to it!

For example, if our breathing is healthy and normal, we are not even aware that we are breathing, but if we have a cold or asthma, we will surely be aware of our breathing. The same is true with our mental well-being: when everything is healthy, we are not even aware of our mental processes, and we feel balanced and contented within ourselves. But when things are out of balance, our heart gives us clear warning signals that something is wrong. We feel anxious, depressed, fearful or angry, and these emotions can escalate into mental illness if not managed properly.

The theme for World Health Day this year is depression, and the reason is clear if we examine the statistics. According to the WHO, more than 300 million people are now living with depression, and it is the leading cause of ill health and disability worldwide. Also, depression-related suicide is now the second leading cause of deaths for 15 to 29 year-olds. These statistics are chilling. We are facing an epidemic of mental imbalance around the world.

There are many reasons and causes, and not all of these can be solved, but one thing is clear: we need some basic tools to better manage our mental well-being in this day and age.

There has long been a stigma around mental illness, and there is a reason for that. Our species name, *Homo sapiens*, means 'wise man'. Even the word 'man' comes from the Sanskrit word '*manas*' meaning mind. As a species, we identify with our mind much more than with our physical body.

This you can see in our everyday reactions. If someone tells you, "What is wrong, your face looks terrible?" you may be offended, but you will be more offended if they say, "You have lost your mind," or "You are so dumb!" Our ego is hurt more by a slight to our mental well-being, whether it be to our intelligence, our thinking capacity or our emotional maturity. That is also why mental illness is much more of a stigma than physical illness. Diabetes is more acceptable than schizophrenia, even though both are serious health problems.

Mental health is a sensitive subject! And, it is very understandable, actually, as the ego is itself one of our mental bodies. These 'mental bodies' - known for thousands of years as the 'subtle bodies' in Yoga - define us as human beings. Our ego gives us our sense of identity.

So what if we focus on trying to solve the problem? What if we can find simple ways and methods to look after our mental bodies so that they are refreshed, rejuvenated and revitalized? What simple tools can help us regain mental balance, so that we can feel as good as possible and function well in today's world of high stress and fast pace? We may not be able to solve all the issues that lead to mental imbalance, but we can at least do the best we can to look after ourselves.



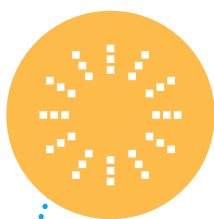
Four simple PRACTICES

Here are four very simple practices that, if done daily with interest and enthusiasm, will support and help to balance your mental well-being. You will find a set of three masterclasses on these Heartfulness practices at <http://heartfulness.org/masterclass>

1. Relax

Learn a simple relaxation technique that you can do anywhere, anytime. The Heartfulness Relaxation takes just a few minutes and is especially helpful when you need to sleep, deal with moments of panic, stress or fear, or to generally help you to feel more contented.

You can also use *nadi* breathing to calm yourself down, whenever you feel panicked or stressed. Hold your right nostril with your thumb and take 10 deep breaths in and out through your left nostril: it activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which calms you down.



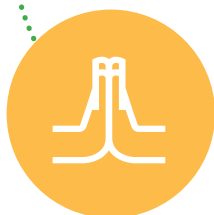
2. Meditate

Meditation regulates the mind. The mind learns to gently and naturally focus on one thing, and in heart-based meditation we go deeper into the heart - where we discover our world of feelings, inspiration, creativity and love - and come out refreshed, with a deep sense of well-being.



3. Clean your heart and mind

Your mind and heart need to be cleaned just like your body. By keeping them clean, you will find inner stillness, lightness, clarity and calm. Your mind will regain its natural flexibility and let go of its heavy burden.



4. Connect with your higher Self

To feel whole and contented, we need to nurture all our three bodies - the physical, mental and spiritual. We can nurture the mental and spiritual bodies by connecting with our higher Self within the heart. This connection is done through the time-honored practice of prayer. Prayer creates that inner condition in the heart that can be filled with love. Prayer takes us into the infinite world of the heart, which is filled with so much joy and beauty.

Be in tune with NATURAL CYCLES

As well as doing the above practices, mental well-being depends on living as natural a lifestyle as possible. Human beings are part of Nature, and as such have daily, weekly, monthly and longer-term cycles that are wired into our physiology. For example, we have daily cycles of activity, rest and sleep, and if we go against these it is like swimming upstream – our health is badly affected, especially as we age. We also have monthly cycles that are in tune with the lunar cycles. Again, if we are not in tune with these, we will be swimming upstream.

Here are four tips that help us fine-tune with Nature and look after ourselves better:

1. Get a good night's sleep.

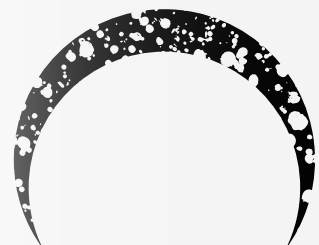
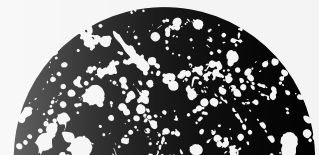
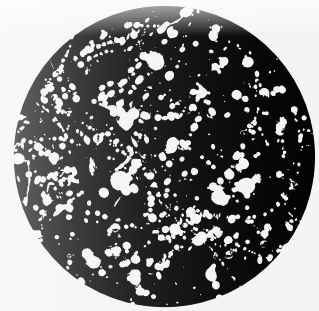
Try to sleep by 10 p.m. so that you are maximizing the benefits of your sleeping hours. Before sleeping, spend some time winding down and relaxing, or enjoying the company of family and friends, rather than watching TV or playing video games, which over-stimulate the brain and lead to restless sleep.

2. Be an early bird

Wake early and meditate. This gives you a great start to the day with a contented, balanced feeling inside. And if you can carry that inner state with you out into your day, you will be able to handle anything that is thrown at you, no matter how challenging.

3. Speak with love

When we are awake, much of our time is spent in communicating with others. So make an effort to speak gently, tenderly and moderately; it will change your life. To learn more about how to do this, visit <http://www.heartfulnessmagazine.com/speak-with-love/>.





4. Eat with love

The other thing we spend a lot of time doing while we are awake is eating. Eating and digesting food takes energy. To be healthy, both physically and mentally, we need to take time to eat, so that our energy reserves can focus on digesting. Is that possible when we are eating on the go, driving, watching TV, or sitting at a computer screen working? No! The body is diverting energy to the other tasks being performed, so our digestion suffers. Many of us have lost the art of eating.

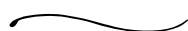
Then, there is the matter of how we eat. Are we grateful for what we are eating? Scientific studies are now showing the benefits of gratitude in any activity, and eating with an attitude of gratitude, love and compassion has a very different effect on our bodies than eating with greed, or a lack of awareness. Why not take care of our bodies in this way? It will pay great dividends in the long run, and there are many studies now linking depression with gut health.

So dear friends, our mental well-being is worth nurturing. I would be happy to answer any questions you have about this vital area of health, and hope you will try the Heartfulness practices that have been designed for this very purpose. Through them, we learn to listen to our heart and care for ourselves and for others as well.

Heartfulness can bring us to first base – to a state of mental balance and peace. From there we can take it much, much further, in order to experience the inner states of joy and inspiration that are our human birthright. Please join us.

You can write to me at daaji@heartfulness.org, visit our websites at www.heartfulness.org and daaji.org, and try Heartfulness practices for yourself at one of our [HeartSpots](#) or via our [LetsMeditate App](#) for smartphones.

All the best,
Daaji



About Kamlesh D. Patel:

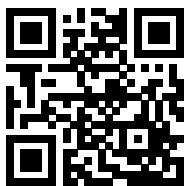


Known to many as Daaji, Kamlesh D. Patel is the fourth guide in the Heartfulness tradition of meditation. Embracing the many roles of a modern-day teacher, he has that rare capacity to dive deep into the center of his existence in the heart, while simultaneously having a scientific approach to original research in the field of meditation, spirituality and human evolution. He is a prolific speaker and writer, and you can read his latest writings at www.daaji.org.

About Heartfulness:

Heartfulness is an approach to the Raja Yoga system of meditation called Sahaj Marg, founded at the turn of the 20th century and formalized into an organization in 1945. More than seventy years later, Heartfulness has been adopted globally by groups across civil society, government departments, schools and colleges and corporates.

In 130 countries, supported by 8,000 certified volunteer trainers, over a million people are practising Heartfulness. This number continues to grow globally through hundreds of Heartfulness Centres worldwide.



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