What to Know About Meditation for AFib

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Meditation for AFib

Many strides have been made in the medical treatment of atrial fibrillation (AFib), but even with improved treatments, people are always seeking alternative interventions. Some worry about the effects of being on prescription medication long-term, while others believe the risks of surgical procedures outweigh the positives. However, meditation for AFib may be helpful too.

Studies have investigated several options, but the consistent standout has been meditation for AFib and AFib symptoms. Meditation is a practice people react strongly to, and at times, these reactions are triggered by distorted, incomplete or incorrect information regarding the activity.

Meditation Explained

Meditation is often misunderstood because it can mean a range of different things. Additionally, the definition of meditation will depend on the source of your information. In general, meditation is the act of modifying the mind. This act will aid the growth and development of:

- Focus and concentration.
- Mental clarity.
- Positivity and optimism.
- Feelings of calm.

Meditation does not have the goal of slowing down your thoughts or removing them from the mind altogether. Meditation is moving you towards a state of awareness. It just so happens that thoughts get in the way of this goal.

Many people confuse meditation for being something it is not. With a definition so broad, this mistake is understandable. Because of this, it can be helpful to understand what meditation is not. Meditation is not:

- **A religious experience.** Though some religions utilize variations of meditation, it is not specifically associated with religion.
- **Sitting and breathing.** These are exercises that can be done to establish a more hospitable environment for meditation to take place but are not necessary. People can meditate in many scenarios and situations, and someone assuming a meditative pose may not be meditating.
- **Deep focus.** Meditation can help build focus, but focusing on one object or idea for a long period is not part of most meditations.

There are many activities and exercises people do to relax. People garden or do crossword puzzles; some will jog or knit. These are helpful practices that aid in relaxation, but that is all they are: relaxation. Though meditation as a component of relaxation, it goes far beyond.

Relaxation vs. Meditation for AFib

Confusing relaxation for meditation is common. You may find yourself sitting on the couch staring thoughtlessly at the TV with certainty that you are meditating because of your thoughtless position.

Thoughtlessness is important, but so is awareness. When people stare at the TV, they are aware of nothing. A burglar could come in and steal every item of value in the house without the TV watcher even knowing because they are so disconnected from the world around them. Meditation strives towards being aware of everything.

With relaxation, there is usually another activity done to achieve the state of relaxation. Watching TV, scrolling through social media, exercising and crafting are all examples. Here, the relaxation is a byproduct of the activity. In meditation, the outcome is direct.

To add to the confusion, there are relaxation techniques. These are specialized tools that people use to achieve a level of lower stress and anxiety while producing feelings of relaxation.

Mental health professionals usually research and prescribe relaxation techniques to clients with high stress or anxiety disorders. Relaxation techniques can include:

- Deep breathing.
- Guided imagery.
- Autogenic training.
- Progressive muscle relaxation.
- Mindfulness training.

Some, but not all, relaxation techniques share aspects of meditation. This means if you are actively receiving therapy services and you are interested in learning more about meditation, you could ask for more information and techniques from your therapist.

Awareness Building

If you are still curious about meditation for AFib but you are not ready to commit completely to its practice, consider taking some steps towards mindful awareness. Fortunately, mindfulness uses many acronyms to get its point across in easily digestible portions.

Some examples include STOP, ACE, SAFE and POINT. Although they are different, they share similar themes like:

- **Stop or pause.** Before anything else can be done, you must stop whatever it is you are doing. This allows the mind to be more observant and aware of the present.
- **Gather information.** If you can listen to your body and observe the world that surrounds you, you can collect valuable data. You can passively gather by allowing information to come to you, or you can actively gather by tuning yourself into certain parts of your body, thoughts, feelings or environment.
- **Play detective.** What is the information from the previous step telling you? Where does it come from? What is it based on? What can be done about it? The questions work to modify perceptions of the situation — they are not to solve a problem.
- **Become aware.** The gathering and detecting should open you up to a new awareness about where you are and what is going on with you. This new understanding yields the awareness that you set out to gain at the beginning.

Some of the best situations to test out your new mindfulness techniques on are eating and walking. Both tend to be mindless activities, so adding mindfulness to them can really change the experience.

AFib brings with it a host problems, concerns and negativity. Rather than maintaining a pessimistic view, consider finding the opportunity in AFib. AFib can be an opportunity for new ideas like mindfulness to be brought into your

life.