

The business of meditation

- By Georgina Jerums
- From: *The Daily Telegraph*
- March 14, 2010 12:01AM



Source: The Daily Telegraph

MEDITATION is now moving into the boardroom with studies showing that it improves concentration, workers are now being encouraged to tune in and chill out.

Once a week, a handful of Blake Dawson lawyers and support staff take the lift to a hushed conference room in Sydney's George Street.

They are not meeting for a tough legal pitch.

They are there to do a voluntary lunchtime group meditation. They're not alone.

Businesses such as NAB, Victoria Police, Diabetes Australia, Origin Energy and the CEO Institute have also run meditation sessions.

These are corporate heavies who are as far away from ohm-chanting, saffron-robed monks as you can get. What's going on?

Growing calm

Meditation is a growing business trend that may be coming soon to an office near you.

It is cropping up in human resources programs across the country to promote calm as we work overtime, skip lunch, do meeting marathons, save our annual leave, lose sleep over job security and monster mortgages, and multi-task like mad in the global recession backwash.

Start of sidebar. [Skip to end of sidebar.](#)

Related Coverage

- [The essential guide to yoga](#) *Daily Telegraph*, 30 Jan 2010
- [Yoga clears the mind, and jails](#) *The Australian*, 26 Jan 2010
- [Yoga for stroke](#) *Adelaide Now*, 15 Nov 2009
- [Ripper's battle with depression](#) *Perth Now*, 24 Oct 2009
- [Victim tells of jail hell](#) *Herald Sun*, 26 Sep 2009

End of sidebar. [Return to start of sidebar.](#)

With all those pressures to contend with, we've become a mighty anxious lot.

So anxious, in fact, that one in five Australians took medication to alleviate stress in the past fortnight, according to 2008 data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

What's more, workplace stress costs the national economy \$10.11 billion annually through absenteeism or sluggish productivity, and leads to the loss of 3.2 days per worker each year, according to research by health fund Medibank Private.

Bosses are starting to realise that investing in stress-reduction programs, such as meditation, makes fiscal sense, too.

After all, employers are responsible for implementing stress management in the workplace under the Workplace Health and Safety Act 2004, and if they don't look after staff, it can hurt them in the hip pocket.

The average cost of a stress-related work claim in 2009 in Victoria, for instance, was a hefty \$51,000, says WorkSafe Victoria.

Stress busting

Kate James, director of corporate coaching company Total Balance, works with banks, advertising agencies, government corporations and not-for-profit organisations in Sydney and Melbourne.

She says meditation at work is on the rise.

"I get double the enquiries for meditation sessions compared to five years ago," she says. "The global financial crisis had an impact, and people are now looking at alternatives for happiness and wellbeing.

For personal clients, I've had to add workshops to meet demand."

The fact that results can be seen after just one session makes meditation a popular stress-reduction technique, James says.

"Even just 10 minutes of meditation at the start of the day is great for recharging energy and improving concentration."

She says you don't need to be spiritual, recite a mantra or meditate in a group. Once the basics are in place, you can meditate alone for free whenever you like. She says you get better at meditating by simply doing it.

Anyone can benefit, including the toughest, most self-sufficient staff.

"Those working in the law are well known for their mental resilience, but meditation can help them manage stress and maximise wellbeing," explains Kate Wisdom, Blake Dawson's wellbeing coordinator.

"Meditation sessions are about positive psychology, a preventive approach to stress."

Office yoga

Like meditation, workplace yoga can have a destressing effect. Thuy Ly, a business analyst with Axa, attends a weekly 60-minute yoga class with about 20 colleagues.

The class has been taught on-site for the past 18 months.

"It takes me away from my desk and away from thinking about my to-do list," she says.

"As I sit in front of a computer most of the day, I'm conscious of ways I can improve my sitting posture.

"Yoga releases tension by stretching my muscles and it's helped me understand the importance of taking a break to improve concentration."

Given that we spend up to a third of our waking lives at work (yes, that much), it pays to keep stress levels down.

Left unchecked, job stress has been shown to be a substantial contributor to mental illness, cardiovascular disease and musculoskeletal problems.

It can also lead to headaches, an upset stomach, rashes, insomnia and high blood pressure.

Something to particularly watch out for if you work in industries recording the highest levels of stress, such as education, the police force, finance, hospitality, transport, retail and marketing.

Three-minute meditation

Close your eyes. Breathe in through your nose, then exhale slowly through your mouth. Repeat until your pulse slows.

As soon as your mind wanders, draw your attention back to your breath. Imagine blowing away thoughts as they enter your mind.

Australian study

In a 2009 study, Dr Ramesh Manocha, a Sydney GP and researcher at the School of Women's and Children's Health at the University of NSW, found that after eight weeks of silent meditation, occupational stress was reduced by 26 per cent.

"The way you think and feel can influence your health," says Dr Manocha.

"Organisations are beginning to realise this and are investing in human resources to promote staff mental wellbeing. Workers only need two 10-minute sessions of meditation a day to see health improvements.

The groundbreaking thing is that meditation is no longer seen as a tie-dyed, hippie concept. It's now mainstream and more accepted."

"My focus is better"

Nikki Prentice, an assistant general counsel at Blake Dawson's Sydney office, participated in a voluntary five-session introductory meditation course offered by her firm in 2009 and can now achieve sharper and longer periods of concentration.

"I'm better at recognising and letting go of distracting thoughts and am better at prioritising the task at hand," she says. "I can focus on research or drafting for longer periods before feeling the need to check my email."

Restraining from that oh-so-addictive constant email checking syndrome?

And being on the ball for longer periods at work thanks to meditation, rather than thanks to a mid-afternoon sugar hit or caffeine high?

Plenty of us, it seems, could do with a bit of help on that front.

A worthwhile outcome for a few sessions of learning to breathe in a more relaxed manner and sitting still for 40 minutes or so.

Prentice was as surprised as anyone that meditation has helped her to beef up her mental stamina.

She knew that meditation could come in handy for unwinding and destressing, but to find that meditation is also helping her to achieve her goals in such a tangible way has been an added bonus.

Prentice was no meditator before her course. In fact, she had only had "a very basic taste of meditation" courtesy of yoga classes before embarking on the introductory course.

Instead of finding it a drag and becoming annoyed at having to squeeze it into a crammed appointment schedule, she found the sessions an enjoyable respite from the working day.

Yet she is quick to add that getting the mind 100 per cent sharp by meditating is an elusive concept. "It would take a lot of practise to experience mental silence," she concedes.

Still, for her, there's no doubt the meditation course has given her a desirable skill for her career toolkit: a better ability to focus.

[Back to top of page](#)

Have your say

Skip to:

[Read comments](#)

[Add comments](#)

Add your comment on this story

Comments Form

Enter your comment here *
1200 characters left

Your details

Full name (*will appear on site*) *

Email Address *

Location (optional)

Post Options

- Remember my details
- Email me if my comment is published

Victoria

Metro defers bridge repairs



8:28PM Ashley Gardiner CRUMBLING railway bridges and subways across Melbourne require a major upgrade set to soak up hundreds of millions of dollars.

Ambo emergency



6:16PM *Matt Johnston* EMERGENCY patients are waiting an average of 17 minutes for an ambulance in outer Melbourne.

- [Your suburb: Ambo response times](#)
- [1200 staff awarded: \\$9m for stressed teachers](#)
- [GG honour: Tributes to our bravest](#)
- [Discovery Day : Dame turns on a beauty](#)
- [Sinkhole fatality: Scuba diving tragedy](#)
- [More Victoria](#)

The Other Side

Private eyes sniff out missing pets



4:04AM *By Richard Noone and Katherine Firkin* DESPERATE pet owners are turning to detectives to help them find their lost doggies, kitties and more exotic pets.

Prince Philip's strip club 'bungle'



3:58PM *By Neil Millard, The Sun* PRINCE Philip has done it again, this time asking a navy cadet if she worked in a strip club.

- [Video game: Surgeon crowned new 'King of Kong'](#)
- [Swallowed: Dog-eating python strikes again](#)
- [Minnesota: Jail for secretly filming naked wife](#)
- [London: Confusion as birds 'fall out of the sky'](#)
- [More wacky news](#)

More related coverage

- [Healthy in a hurry *Herald Sun*, 6 Sep 2009](#)
- [Kirk glad to stay out of spotlight *Daily Telegraph*, 6 Aug 2009](#)
- [Beat the blues *Herald Sun*, 1 Aug 2009](#)
- [Calming kids without drugs *Adelaide Now*, 13 Jul 2009](#)
- [Switching off to be right on *Herald Sun*, 6 Sep 2009](#)
- [Hard evidence Swans are too soft *Daily Telegraph*, 6 Aug 2009](#)

More related coverage

Related Searches

- [Port Adelaide](#)



Herald Sun TAC 2010 **SUPERCOACH**
 Is **HERE**. Start selecting your team now for your chance to win **\$50,000 cash**, plus thousands of dollars in weekly prizes
escape
 YOUR HOLIDAY **SUPERSITE**

Most Popular Stories

1. [Open letter to Lara Bingle](#)
2. [Bingle's ring 'stuck down Clarke's toilet'](#)
3. [Cheap solar on the way](#)
4. ['Bingle threw ring down the toilet'](#)
5. [Dogs win first flag in 40 years](#)

Top News

[New kid's hospital](#)



11:18PM Grant McArthur **EXCLUSIVE:** A NEW children's hospital will be built in Melbourne's southeast to ease the pressure on paediatric services.

- [Carrying capacity: Lucky country under threat](#)
- [Release date: Henry review 'to go public in May'](#)



MONEY&ME Partnered with **st.george**
 JOIN THE CONVERSATION WITH OTHER AUSTRALIANS **CLICK HERE**

Top Sport

[Zip whip furore](#)



Rod Nicholson THE owners of Sirmione are threatening legal action if stewards refuse to consider stripping Zipping of the Australian Cup.

- [Night premiers: We fear no one - Bulldogs](#)
- [A-League: Aloisi fits Victory plan](#)
- [Rugby: Freier joins Rebels gang](#)
- [NZ series: Clarke to play in Test](#)
- [More Sport](#)

More News

Entertainment

Kylie raking in the dollars



6:06PM Staff Writer IT'S more than two decades since she had her first hit in Britain. But new figures show Kylie Minogue's commercial appeal is stronger than ever.

- [Daryl's diet: Hey hey, no more meat pie](#)
- [160 arrests: Metallica fans riot at concert](#)
- [Radio investigation: Mitchell in cash-for-comment probe](#)
- [Logies snub: Daryl's still not gold class](#)

- [More Entertainment](#)

National

Bureau, CSIRO weigh into debate



10:21PM Nick Leys SOME of Australia's leading scientists have hit back at climate-change sceptics.

- [Miracle baby: Mr Shuffles makes his entrance](#)
- [Transplant need: Man offers to die for tot](#)
- [Girl's best friend: Diamonds going for a song](#)
- [Happy families: Two good to be true](#)

- [More National](#)

Breaking News

Two arrested for 'planning terror attack'

11:02PM POLICE claim men were ordered from Pakistan to attack shopping centre and fuel facility.

- [Politics: Britain poised to axe House of Lords](#)
- [Pop princess: Minogue so lucky in cash stakes](#)
- [Child: Bulger killer may escape trial](#)
- [Poll: Parties neck-and-neck in campaign](#)

- [More Breaking News](#)

-
- [Help](#)
 - [About Us](#)
 - [Contact Us](#)
 - [Get your Newspaper Delivered](#)
 - [Advertise with us](#)
 - [Link to Us](#)
 - [Cadetship](#)
 - [Job Opportunities](#)
 - [Terms & Conditions](#)

- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [Accessibility](#)
- [Sitemap](#)

© Herald and Weekly Times. All times AEDT (GMT +11)