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## THE IMPORTANCE OF MEDITATION

Go placidly amid the noise and the haste, and remember what peace there may  
be in silence. — Max Ehrmann, *Desiderata*

To engage in the regular practice of meditation does not mean that we enclose ourselves in a hermetically sealed cocoon of bliss, remaining oblivious to events in the outer world. In fact, meditation allows us to better cope with the pressures of the outer world, not by providing us a means of escape, but by enabling us to face those challenges calmly and insightfully. The experienced meditator draws strength and confidence from a deep reservoir of inner peace and wisdom, which is brought about by many years of meditative practices.

But we can also make the mistake of immersing ourselves too much in the news of the day, thereby making ourselves vulnerable to negative feelings such as anxiety and irritability. The 24-hour news cycle is based largely on sensationalistic headlines designed to keep the ratings up in order to generate more advertising revenue. Excessive exposure to news headlines negates the positive effects gained during meditation. It is all too easy to be swept away by salacious stories of Hollywood celebrities that have very little relevance to our life. It is all too common for our perspective on life to become cynical when fed a steady “fast-food” news diet of government corruption, corporate malfeasance, pending financial disasters. The regular practice of meditation, coupled with the study of spiritual books, helps one to retain a balanced and calm perspective amidst such ongoing turbulence.

Aristotle believed that most people are ultimately searching for happiness. But how can we hope to lead a happy and peaceful life if we remain conflicted by feelings of anger, frustration, and helplessness? How can we hope to make the world a better place if our own house is not in order? Meditation should be an essential component of any spiritual discipline. Its practice helps us to remain calm and collected, even when turmoil reigns about us; meditation helps us to see things clearly amidst outer confusion and chaos; and, finally, it leads us to that inner temple of indescribable bliss which abides in the true Self.

David P. Bruce  
Director of Education