

## Prosperous Meditation: Care for the Caregivers: The Therapist's Issue

### Introduction

This issue is a "beginning meditation kit" for my colleagues; therapists, social workers, mental health professionals and other "caregiver types". But don't worry, if you are not a therapist there is plenty that applies.; everyone (particularly mothers) is a caregiver at some point in their day or life. This is the first time I have placed all three of the focused meditations I teach in one newsletter so you may want to print this one out to have as instructions.



For an introduction to meditation and the use of breath in general one can go to [prosperousmeditation.com](http://prosperousmeditation.com) and download my newsletter on this topic.

### Stress Self and Other

On a typical work day a therapist will welcome individuals, couples, families or even groups into their office. The therapist listens, really listens, often with as Freud put it, "with an evenly suspended attention" (a meditative state by the way) that allows the therapist to listen differently. The therapist opens herself to trauma, conflict, fears, primitive emotions and the patient's heartache. The therapist further opens himself to projections from clients, transferences and his own counter transferences, extends empathy and becomes a container, all on a daily basis. The therapist as self literally takes in much information and negative energy of the other and processes it in an effort to help the other. Now while therapists find this to be invigorating at times (otherwise why become a therapist?), there is a toll to pay for being a container. This work carries it's own kind of stress and if not dealt with in a proper manner will wear the therapist down and can cause burnout. There are many ways for therapists to care for self and deal with this kind of stress including meeting with colleagues and friends, going on vacations, having one's own therapist etc. Another way that is most helpful is to meditate. The following is a meditation that not only establishes a relaxed state in a only minutes but helps clear the body and mind, a perfect exercise after a difficult session or a difficult day.

### White Light Meditation or How to Clear

Sit comfortably in a chair with eyes closed and back reasonably straight. Extend arms and hands out, palms up on the rest on chair-arms or comfortably on cushion of chair. Observe breathing as it becomes deeper and more even. Imagine an amber (orange-yellow) bar of light extending from the bottom of the spine deep into the ground. Imagine, envision or pretend (visualization is fine but not necessary) that a white light is coming down from above. It begins to surround you and fill the room. The white light freely goes through your body and mingles with the cells of your body bringing a sense of peace. Extend your hands above your head and in front of your body, tips of finger tips slightly touching and "push" the light down with hands like a scan in front of the body. If the hands stop or a resistance or blockage is felt, send extra white light to the area melting it like an ice cube would melt on a hot frying pan. Proceed as before until all blockages are clear. When you reach the your lap imagine the white light going down your legs and feet into the ground creating a connection between earth and sky flowing with white light. Notice that you are now in a meditative state and enjoy this for awhile. This meditation clears any stress that is held in the body and can be combined with an "open meditation" or other meditation techniques.

### Obstacles to Meditation and the Prosperous Meditation Method

If the well documented benefits of meditation are so wonderful then why aren't more people meditating and why do so many people seem to fail at developing a meditative practice? (Why don't more of us eat well?) Any practice that requires change and a certain amount of discipline no mater how much joy it may engender is still work. Many come to meditation when they are so stressed that they are in crisis. This is not an ideal time to begin meditating as success is difficult and many have a negative experience and then feel they can't meditate. Better to begin practice when times are stable and then meditation will serve during the hard times. Many beginning meditators attempt to meditate for long period of times using difficult meditations or meditations that do not fit their temperament.

The Prosperous Meditation Method starts with "Focused Meditation" to achieve a meditative state as opposed to an "Open Meditation" which can be more difficult. A focused meditation involves focusing on something like a mantra (I don't personally care for mantras but others love them). This is why T.M. was popular when first introduced to



Frank Nichols, LCSW

**Prosperous  
Meditation**  
Issue #11  
Oct. 2006

Empathetic and Professional Service

## **Prosperous Meditation: Care for the Caregivers: The Therapist's Issue**

westerners as it used a focus to get people to relax. An open meditation is more like what we think of as Zen...the allowing of thoughts to go by as if floating down a stream. An open meditation tends to open one to what comes as in opening to the universe. Focus meditations can help one focus on something specific like a problem or a challenge. One can use a focused meditation to achieve a meditative state and then shift into an open meditation if they choose. Prosperous Meditation emphasizes, meditating for short periods of time on a daily basis (5 minutes a day eliminates the excuse that there isn't enough time), the use of natural joyful trance states, the use of mindfulness, the tailoring of technique to the individual's need, that meditation and centering have health benefits, improves ego functioning and has a carry over effect into one's day and life and finally, the use of meditation for problem solving and improving quality of life.

### **Taking Care of Self and the Doing Meditation**

Therapists often have inverted or odd hours, finding time for self and self care is a priority. A simple way of doing this is utilizing the "Doing Meditation" which induces a pleasant meditative or natural trance state for fifteen minutes every day.

The first step involved in this meditation is to find a pleasurable activity that is engrossing and can be done easily every day. Examples would include knitting, gardening, drawing, even cleaning the house if that gives you pleasure. Many therapists I know have an interest in writing fiction or poetry ; this is an ideal "doing meditation" as it requires neither good weather nor much in the way of material resources to do. Compile a list of pleasurable activities to try. The second step is to do the activity while being "mindful" of your experience and feelings for fifteen minutes or less. The final step is to at the end of the fifteen minutes to observe and note your current state and what comes up for you. After this you may wish to continue your activity or go about your day. Do this every day and see how you feel.

### **The Pleasant Memory Technique**

This meditation is excellent when one feels like they are "down" or in a rut. Before beginning the meditation, recall and choose a happy or pleasant memory. It could be as simple as an ice cream cone you enjoyed or a pleasurable childhood memory. Do not pick a memory that has complications for you. For example you might not want to choose a memory of meeting a boy friend when you have just broken up! Find a comfortable sitting position, close eyes and observe breath. Notice how this is relaxing and meditative in and of itself. Now remember the pleasant memory and play it back to yourself like a movie. See the scenes, hear the sounds, even smell the smells if this fits. Bring this memory into the now and feel all the pleasant and happy feeling tones associated with it. Observe and enjoy this. Now, step away from this for a moment by simply observing your breath. Return to the pleasant feelings, re-generating them but without the memory. Enjoy this for awhile. What else comes up for you?

### **Concepts to Consider and Conclusion**

When a therapist meditates on a regular basis a number of experiences and questions may arise. Besides the benefits of recharging own's batteries and the clearing of client toxic material what if own finds themselves increasingly centered? What if one finds themselves having more access to their own and patient's unconscious material? What if one is able to truly care for self, becomes happier and better able to withstand "the slings and arrows of outrageous misfortune"? Might not this all translate into better work with patients? And what about the possibilities of the client's use of meditation or rather meditation as therapy or adjunct to therapy? That is a question many are asking with very interesting results...perhaps a topic for another newsletter!

*Frank Nichols, LCSW is a Social Worker, Speaker and Consultant who in addition to individual and couples counseling combines psychotherapy with meditative practices. Groups are available, corporate workshops as well as meditation coaching. Please see his web-site [www.prosperousmeditation.com](http://www.prosperousmeditation.com)*

*Frank practices in Northport and Forest Hills, New York.*

*For consultation Call (631) 896-6352 [fnicholslcsw@gmail.com](mailto:fnicholslcsw@gmail.com)*

