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The Benefits of Meditation on Shooting Performance

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Abstract

Meditation is something anyone can do, anytime, anywhere – even someplace loud. It's easy to learn and involves some pretty basic techniques. Like anything new, the more we meditate, the more comfortable we'll get spending time with our mind. People might associate meditation with sitting in silence and stopping all of our thoughts and feelings to become calm. But that's not really how the mind works, and neither does meditation. Rather than trying to stop our thoughts, we practice letting thoughts come and go. Meditation is a huge part of mental health and it is very important for shooters as well. A stable mind is a huge asset to have and meditation is how one can attain a stable mind. Despite its many benefits some shooters may still have doubts about why we should meditate and what positive effects it can have on their shooting. This is why we have compiled a list of the most common effects of meditation and how they may affect one's shooting in a positive manner.

What is Meditation

Misconception is what surrounds the term "meditation". The first misconception is that the word "meditation" itself has nothing to do with the act it describes. We cannot connect the word itself with the act of sitting still with one's eyes closed. So when we say 'meditation', what exactly do we mean? What should Shooters know about Meditation?

Most of the time when people think of meditation they think of the act of “dhyan”. If we consider that this is in fact right then one cannot actively try meditation. No one person has the ability to do meditation and this is why most people find it hard and fail to do it at the beginning. However, if we try to be meditative instead of meditating we may succeed. Most of you reading this will have their thoughts jumbled up at this moment so let’s untangle them one by one. Meditation is not an act one can excel or perfect. Rather it is a specific quality that a human can possess if they cultivate their mind, body, emotions and energies properly. This may seem like a very confusing and extremely difficult thing to do. This is when an example will come in handy to explain what exactly we mean when we say this. Imagine you are a farmer who is trying their best to try and have a successful crop. A plant will not grow and blossom flowers and produce fruit just because you want it to. You need to provide a nourishing environment and atmosphere for it to grow. You need to fertilize the soil with manure, nourish it with water and sow in healthy seeds to get favourable results. Similarly if we create a nourishing and warm atmosphere within ourselves, meditation will flow through us naturally just like a flower blooms to a well nourished and healthy plant.

Why is meditation so important on Shooters

Meditation is the very useful for the shooters. Most of us have lived our lives perceiving the world only through our five senses – sight, smell, sound, taste and touch. What if we told you that we can perceive ourselves and the world with more than just these five senses? What if we told you that we have the ability to better perceive the world and ourselves through these five senses? What if we told you that the only way this can be achieved is by becoming meditative? If we are willing to dedicate just a couple of minutes of our daily lives to sit still and open our minds to the inner workings of our own body and mind we will be able to reach an unlimited level of perception. “Why is improving our perception so important?” one may ask. Well the thing is that which is beyond our perception does not exist for us. We can only experience and handle those things which we are aware of and can perceive. If we take this into consideration then we are unaware of a large part of ourselves. In today’s life we are so busy trying to experience the many wonders of the outside world that we have forgotten the access code to what is within us. If we are truly able to fully perceive that which is within us, then and only then, will we be able to perceive the outer world better and be better prepared for what is about to

happen in our lives. With better perception of the happening around us we will be able to handle the things that come our way more maturely. If we improve our perception we will be able to enhance the experiences we have through our five senses as well.

Benefits of Meditation

1. **Stress Reduction** – This is the most common effect of meditation. When you are in physical and mental stress your body produces increased levels of a hormone known as cortisol. This disrupts sleep, promotes anxiety, increases blood pressure, contributes to fatigue and clouds your thinking and all of these affect ones shooting directly. If you have any of these symptoms it is probably due to stress and it will definitely have a negative effect on your shooting. Therefore to improve your shooting you must reduce your stress levels and this can be done through meditation.
2. **Controls Anxiety** – As mentioned above less stress translates to less anxiety. High levels of anxiety can also result in panic attacks which can affect a shooter in a very big way. It is very common for shooters to have anxiety before and during a competition, even the best of the best have pre-competition jitters. It is how they handle and manage their anxiety that makes or breaks them. A top shooter will know how to control their anxiety and this is why they are able to perform well even in the most high pressure matches. Meditation is the most direct way of reducing your anxiety and will have a very clear and positive effect on your shooting. If one learns to handle stress and anxiety on a daily basis they will also be able to do it during match situations.
3. **Promotes Emotional Health** – Meditation helps in developing and maintaining a more positive self image as well as a better outlook on life. One is also less inclined towards depression if they meditate regularly. One may think, “How will a positive self-image or a good outlook on life help me shoot better?” The answer to this question is in the fact that if you have a positive self-image you will have an optimistic outlook on your shooting as well. You will have a positive mind. Having a fit body will bring you no good results if you have a negative attitude towards yourself or your life. The negativity in your mind will seep into your shooting and this will create unfavorable results. If you have a positive mindset it will help you deal with your match results as well. For example – if you do not perform well in an important match, having a

positive mindset will help you learn from the mistakes you made during the match. On the other hand if you have a negative mindset you'll only look at the bad and therefore lose the opportunity to improve and grow as a shooter.

4. **Lengthens Attention Span** – As we all know the attention span of a shooter can make or break his match score. If you have a short attention span you will not be able to maintain focus throughout your match and this can cost you precious points. Meditation can be the solution to this problem. Those forms of meditation that cater to increasing your attention span and focus are like weight lifting exercises for your brain. They help increase the strength and endurance of your attention. If you have good attention you will also have a tendency to be more focused and pay more attention to detail. This is a feather every shooter would love to have on their cap. This will help shooters avoid their worrying tendencies and impulsive mind-wandering and help them grow and improve their skills.

Conclusion

Based on my research, I conclude that meditation has many scientifically proven benefits to both physical and mental health and well-being. There is also room for application of meditation practices in the modern health care system for treating a variety of different symptoms involved in physical and mental conditions. The findings regarding brain structural changes and gray matter density should be further researched, as there are many applications for this knowledge in our health care system.

There are currently many scientific papers discussing the benefits of short term meditation. More research should also be conducted to find out further benefits of long term meditators. Also, sample sizes in these future research projects should include more people for the most reliable information.

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