

Heart Rhythm Meditation

COURSE OUTLINE

I. Description

- A. Heart-Rhythm Meditation
- B. Lecture and lab
- C. No pre-requisites or co-requisites
- D. An introduction to the principles and practice of Heart-Rhythm Meditation (HRM). HRM is a powerful method of inner reflection which involves a deep, full breath and a focus on the heart. We see the heart as both a physical organ, which pumps blood throughout the body, as well as a spiritual faculty, the center of all love, all feeling. HRM builds the health of the heart on three levels: physical, emotional, and spiritual. HRM has been shown to produce a state of entrainment between the pulse, brain-waves, and endocrine system, resulting in increased levels of anti-stress hormones due to a more rhythmic heartbeat and pulse. The course will pursue the theme of physical, emotional, and spiritual heart health.

II. Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course the student will be able to:

- (1) demonstrate skill in meditation and self-mastery by sitting without visible movement for 30 minutes;
- (2) sense the heartbeat *without* the use of any external device, movement, or pressure-point area, (such as fingertip to the wrist or throat);
- (3) fully exhale all the air out of the lungs, and fully inhale into the lungs, demonstrating an increase in forced vital capacity;
- (4) demonstrate control over the breath by keeping a set rhythm between breath and heart-beat;
- (5) demonstrate control over the heartbeat by speeding it up or slowing it at will, without visible movement;

- (6) demonstrate entrainment of heartbeat, brain-waves and endocrine system by creating a rhythm between the breath and the heartbeat, producing a sinusoidal heart rhythm variability (HRV);
- (7) demonstrate advanced control over the breath by maintaining a more complicated rhythm between breath and heartbeat including the holding of the breath;
- (8) sense the pulse (separate from the heartbeat) in any part of the body;
- (9) explain and identify the major scientific findings on the health benefits of meditation, and the use of meditation as therapy for various illnesses;
- (10) identify four recognizable stages of experience that occur in meditation, including the monolithic state, the state of concentration on the heart, and the state of contemplation in the heart;
- (11) identify three emotional effects of meditation, including such things as the ability to hold an emotion without expression or suppression, the feeling of radiant peace, the ability to tap into emotion beyond reason;
- (12) identify at least one spiritual effect of meditation, including perhaps an enhanced understanding of the purpose of life, or one's spiritual archetype;
- (13) explain the model of the emotional / spiritual heart used by the Institute for Applied Meditation -- the heart as a container of energy and magnetism, which factors strengthen and weaken the heart's power;

III. Course Content

- A. An Introduction to Heart-Rhythm Meditation (HRM): What is HRM? What are the effects of HRM?
 1. Types of Meditation
 - a. Upward (Transcendent) Meditation
 - b. Downward Meditation
 2. The Effects of HRM on Physical Health
 - a. Heart Rhythm Variability (HRV) and entrainment
 - b. The Magnetic Field
 - c. Heart Arrhythmia
 - d. Blood pressure

e. Cortisone levels

3. The Effects of HRM on Emotional Health
4. The Effects of HRM on Spiritual Health
5. Applications of HRM
6. Development of a Goal for the Course

B. Fundamentals of Heart Rhythm Meditation Practice

1. Correct Posture
2. Conscious Breathing
3. Consistency of Practice: Set a daily time for your practice.
4. Signpost: *The Monolithic Sensation*

C. The Full Breath

1. The Importance of the Full Breath
2. The Difficulty of Breaking Shallow Breathing Patterns
3. Full Exhalation
4. Full Inhalation
5. Walking Meditation Practice
6. Running Meditation Practice (optional)

D. The Pulse and the Heartbeat

1. Some Heart anatomy
2. Objective: sense the heartbeat or the pulse
3. Advanced Objective: sense the heartbeat separate from the pulse

E. Introducing Rhythmic Breathing: The Swing Breath

1. Further development of the ability to sense the heartbeat
2. Objective: an equal length exhalation and inhalation
3. The heart releases stored emotions
4. Test: Heart Rhythm Monitor measures degree of entrainment

F. Introducing Emotional Heart Health: A Model of the Heart

1. The Heart's Energy
2. The Wounds of the Heart
3. The mind and the heart
4. Uncovering the wounds and healing them
5. Objective: to attain a state where the heart is free of regret, bitterness, or blame

G. Developing Emotional Heart Health: Touching the Heart

1. Discovering the heart's wish and wounds
2. Touching the heart with breath and attention
3. Experiencing gratitude
4. Application of the practice to life

H. Further Development of Emotional Heart Health: Diving into the Heart

1. Objective: to experience the “inverted space”, where one's own deepest, most personal feelings become impersonal, as feelings within the One Heart.
2. Using the power of the glance to energize the heart
3. Probing the most tender spot in the heart
4. Developing the feeling and sensation of universal love

I. An Introduction to States of Consciousness: Terminology and Concepts

0. Free-floating awareness, mind drifts from one stimulus to another
1. Heart-focused
2. Heart-centered
3. The Universal Heart
4. Instrument of the Heart
5. Microcosm

J. An Application of the Power of the Heart: The Heart's Guidance

1. Formulation of a question
2. Placement of the question on the breath and heartbeat
3. A further development: The Heart's Name practice
4. A further development: The Rocking Breath

IV. Instructional Methodology

A. Assignments

1. The course will contain approximately 30 pages of assigned reading per week on the physical, emotional, and spiritual effects of heart-rhythm meditation. Students are expected to complete assigned readings prior to class.
2. Meditation is a skill, and, like other skills, must be practiced in order to attain proficiency. Students will be encouraged to maintain a meditative practice outside class a minimum of 20 minutes in the morning and 20 minutes in the evening.

3. Students will write several brief essays summarizing scientific research on meditation and health.
4. Students will keep a journal of experiences in meditation, as a tool for tracking and understanding states of consciousness and sensations experienced.
5. Students will participate in class discussions related to their experiences with the meditative practices.

B. Evaluation

A student's grade will be determined through a series of in-class examinations which will test the student's ability to demonstrate certain important skills related to meditation, such as correct posture, ability to sit still, control over the breath, ability to maintain breathing rhythms, and sensitivity to the body's rhythms.

Though the state of meditation cannot be brought about through willpower, it has been shown that the above skills constitute a reliable method of attaining broader and deeper levels of heart-consciousness, which has physical, emotional, and spiritual benefits.

Students will also be graded on their performance on the essays, demonstrating their understanding of heart rhythm meditation, and its health-related benefits.

C. Texts and Other Materials

Required Texts:

1. Bair, Puran, and Susanna Bair. *Living from the Heart: Heart Rhythm Meditation for Energy, Clarity, Peace, Joy, and Inner Power*. Tucson, AZ: Living Heart Media.
2. Bair, Puran, and Susanna Bair. *Energize Your Heart in Four Dimensions*. Tucson, AZ: Living Heart Media.
3. Institute for Applied Meditation. *Heart Rhythm Meditation 101: Course Materials*. Ipswich, MA: Institute for Applied Meditation. (includes Audio Meditation CD)

Optional:

1. Bair, Susanna. *Heart Rhythm Meditation: Stages 1 through 3*. Audio CD, 55 min. Ipswich, MA: Institute for Applied Meditation.

2. Bair, Susanna. *The Four Elements of the Heart*. Audio CD, 55 min. Ipswich, MA: Institute for Applied Meditation.

3. Bair, Puran. *Sounds of the Heart*. Audio CD, 47 min. Ipswich, MA: Institute for Applied Meditation.

Other materials:

Additional class material for review and discussion to be prepared by the instructor; overhead projections may also be used and distributed to students for instructional purposes.