

# Being here in the present moment

"Walking, just walk; sitting, just sit; whatever you do, don't wobble" This Zen saying exemplifies what it truly means to be "mindful"; being focused on what you are doing, without any other thoughts. Easier said than done? BRETT SANDERS offers an insight

Mindful is certainly a big buzz word in the world of holistic health, but not many people know what it actually means. Its about focusing on what you are doing and emptying



When having a conversation are you thinking about that evening's dinner?

out all extraneous thoughts so that your "mind" can then become "full" of what you are concentrating upon.

**De-stress**  
The important thing to remember with this holistic and spiritual concept of mindfulness is that you don't necessarily have to be "that way inclined" for it to benefit you. Many great scientists and intellects, both past and present, have used meditation

to build their concentration and reduce stress.

**Be a mind watcher**  
Personally, I have yet to meet a client who would not benefit from daily meditation, the first step of which is to assess the thoughts. This doesn't take very long. Just watch your mind as though you were an impartial onlooker. You will notice that what you are thinking about is not necessarily what you are doing at that moment in time. If you are eating, for example, are you just thinking about your food, your body and your digestion? When having a conversation, are you entirely present in that conversation, listening to every word the other person says or are you thinking about other things - like that evening's dinner, perhaps? When driving, do you ever get ten minutes down the road and realise you haven't actually focused on the road for the last five miles?

**Stay present**  
These are all examples of not being mindful, not being aware of the present moment. From a philosophical perspective, when it comes to mindfulness, there are just two questions and two answers that are important: Where are we? Here. What time is it? Now. Nothing else is more important than the here and the now. Obviously the past

got us here and the future is where we are going, but the only place you ever actually are is here...now...now...now. So remember to stay with what you are doing, as this is the only place that you can actually change anything. There are many exercises from hundreds of teachers on how to become mindful and integrate that state into your life. I am going to share one of them with you today. Bear in mind that if this does not work for you, there will always be another option for you to try. After all, we are unique, and all learn in different ways.

Not only will mindfulness help you focus, it can improve your work, your relationships, your health and your spirit too. Once you become more advanced you can learn more advanced techniques, such as tai chi, qigong or yoga. These will incorporate breathing, movement and mindfulness all in one practice.

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*For more information visit: <http://www.nutritionconditiontuition.com>*



COUNTING BREATHS: Pay attention to your mind and body for better health

## Mindfulness meditation

When meditating, remember to breathe slowly and deeply into your abdomen - as you inhale, your tummy expands, as you exhale your tummy hollows. Now adopt either a strong standing stance, a seat in a chair (trying not to use the back rest as you may fall asleep), or sit comfortably on the floor. Now simply count your breaths. I recommend you count up to four breaths then go back to the beginning and start again. Just four breaths per set are enough. Watching your mind, you will see it thinking about everything but the breaths at times; just acknowledge this and restart your count from one again. I encourage you to aim for a minimum of three minutes once or twice each day, but with no specific limit on the amount you can do. I personally sit in silent meditation for two twenty-minute periods every day.

## Ghosts of the past stirred by haunting melodies

"Music is a way of getting through to Alzheimer's sufferers"

MARTIN CROUCHER  
EPOCH TIMES UK STAFF

When singer-songwriter Jason Soudah got the chance to use his formidable piano skills along with insights gained through studying psychology he was, he admits, astonished by the results.

The Japanese-born 27-year-old started playing the instrument when he was just four and recently left a doctorate in psychology to make a go of it as a professional musician.

However he said that one of the most rewarding things he has done was providing music to help in reminiscence therapy - a technique to help Alzheimer's sufferers recover lost memories.

He said that he was approached by family friends in Japan to provide instrumental piano music for use in 30-minute videos of photos and scenes designed to trigger dormant memories.

He said: "Sometimes they show films with photographs of memories or things that people will have experienced throughout their lives, and stuff that can relate to. There are also people who make personal reminiscence films

composed of things like personal photographs.

"It has been shown that combining music with the films has been more effective



Reminiscing helps us deal with personal traumas by adding context to the things that happen to us

in restoring people's memories.

"Music can reach parts of the brain that other forms of communication can't reach, even in more advanced stages of dementia. It's a way of getting through to Alzheimer's sufferers. It also helps to relax them and improve their men-



Singer-songwriter Jason Soudah plays piano as a background for reminiscence therapy

tal stability and emotional health."

He added: "I always wanted to do something with music that could be really beneficial. This was an opportunity for me to do something with music. It has a profound healing side to it."

"It was really interesting for me too because I didn't know anything about reminiscence therapy before this."

Reminiscence therapy is not just orientated around visual cues such as short videos, but can involve presenting individuals with ornaments, music or smells that capture old memories.

The therapy is an extension of the idea that reminiscing in our daily lives helps us deal with personal traumas by adding context to the things that happen to us.

He added: "I just played

along with some of the images that were on the screen. The music was quite soothing and dreamy, in many ways similar to the music that I use in my own songs."

An FAQ on the British Medical Journal website showed that reminiscence therapy was still an area of contention: "There is some evidence to show that reminiscence therapy helps people with dementia. But we need to see a lot more before we can know for certain that it helps."

Besides providing background tracks to reminiscence videos, Soudah is currently performing in Cardiff and London and preparing to release his first single, "Roses", through an independent label.

*For more information visit his website on [www.myspace.com/jasonsoudah](http://www.myspace.com/jasonsoudah)*

## Future of red clover as medicine

JOHN MORRISON  
AGRICULTURE AND  
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Women suffering menopause symptoms who are concerned about the side effects of oestrogen replacement therapy may one day have an effective natural treatment from red clover.

"We believe there is a future for clover as a hormone-regulator to reduce menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes," says Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada scientist, Dr Yousef Papadopoulos.

Working with colleague, Dr Rong Cao, Dr Papadopoulos has found that the red clover plant contains high levels of bioactive ingredients called isoflavones that can regulate hormones and reduce bone loss due to low oestrogen.

While isoflavone oestrogen extracts from soybeans have been available commercially in recent years, Dr Papadopoulos thinks he is on to something much better.

"We have found that isoflavones are available in red clover at levels 30 times higher than soybeans with the greatest concentrations in the plant leaves," he says. Dr Cao suggests extracting isoflavones from clover could be less expensive as soybean prices are climbing.

**Looking for the four-leaf clover**

Dr Papadopoulos and Dr Cao began investigating red clover in 2000 to substantiate some of the anecdotal evidence and present a clear picture of the potential of red clover as a medicinal plant.

"The isoflavones produced by the red clover plant act as a self-defence mechanism for the plant against insects, bacteria and moulds, and it also appears to have protective qualities for human health," said Dr Cao.

"Isoflavone compounds act as antioxidants and as such have anti-cancer capabilities. Recent studies have also demonstrated their role in reducing the risk of cardiovascular diseases."

### Next steps

The next phase in the research is developing clover varieties with higher isoflavone content.

"We are already screening varieties for the highest desired isoflavones," says Dr Papadopoulos, who specialises in plant breeding and genetics and does his clover research at the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada research facilities on Prince Edward Island.

Evaluation of these bioactive ingredients could take up to two years. Then it is a matter of teaming-up with an industry partner to manufacture a product, something that could take three to five years to complete.

As livestock operators have known for hundreds of years, red clover contains many essential nutrients making it an ideal forage and animal feed. It now has the potential to provide farmers with a source of income in an entirely new field.

Canada has an ideal climate for red clover production and farmers already grow red clover in rotation with other crops. If clover could be sold as a medicinal plant, farmers would have a new crop to market without having to expand their acreage. The red clover plant may have other uses as well. The stems can be turned into a bio fuel pellet for heating, again providing a new income opportunity for farmers.

Dr Papadopoulos is enthusiastic, and not just for red clover's medicinal and economic potential.

*John Morrison is the Regional Communications Officer at Agriculture and Agri-food Canada*

## 'Food of the gods'

LOUISE VALENTINE  
EPOCH TIMES NEW  
YORK STAFF

The "chocolate season" is upon us. Forty per cent of women feel they "need" chocolate and many more just love it. Whether we openly indulge or secretly consume it, we usually regret the pounds piled on. But, surprisingly, this velvet delight may actually have some health benefits.

Chocolate contains many substances in small amounts that have desirable psychological effects, including mild euphoria, excitement, and tranquility. Theobromine, a substance found in chocolate, is Greek for "food of the Gods" and is a mild stimulant. Many individuals find chocolate anchored to pleasant events and feelings in their lives.

However, there are health benefits associated with dark chocolate and cocoa as well. These come from the cocoa bean itself. Milk chocolate and processed chocolate have less of these good things because they are destroyed in manufacture and diluted by sugar, artificial sweeteners and other ingredients.

In a study by an interna-

tional team of scientists from the University of Dusseldorf, Germany, the University of California, Mars Incorporated and Harvard University, it was found that certain flavanols in cocoa have a relaxing effect on blood vessels, lowering blood pressure.

In 1987, Salvador Moncada, Director of the Wolfson Institute, University College, London, discovered that the inner cells of blood vessels are constantly producing nitric oxide, which keeps the blood vessels in a relaxed state.

Meanwhile, on islands off Panama, the Kuna Indians were drinking four or five cups of cocoa a day and using chocolate in their food. Dr Norman Hollenberg, a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School found that high blood pressure in this population was rare. They all had high levels of flavanols and nitric oxide metabolites in their blood.

In contrast, the Kuna on the mainland, who drink less cocoa or none at all, had the same blood pressure problems as everyone else.

The conclusion of all these studies is that the flavanols in the cocoa bean keep the inner cells of the cell walls of blood vessels producing relaxing nitric oxide.

DR JOHN BRIFFA

ON THE  
PULSE



## Glucosamine sulphate relieves osteoarthritis

I see a lot of different health issues in practice and these can be broadly divided into what you might call "primary" and "secondary" concerns. I class primary concerns as the sorts of things that cause individuals to make appointments to see me. Common examples include fatigue, irritable bowel syndrome, asthma and eczema. Secondary concerns, on the other hand, tend not to be volunteered and may only come out whilst I'm doing a review of overall health issues.

### Wear and tear

One common secondary issue relates to the joints. For example, I may see individuals who have a tendency to pain and stiffness in one or more joints, generally due to "wear and tear" or "osteoarthritis". Many of these individuals have sustained a sporting injury at some point, after which they may find the joint is never "quite right".

Of all the joints to be affected in this way, I find the knee to be most commonly troublesome. Not only is this a major weight-bearing joint, but it's also prone to injury from the twisting, turning and abnormal forces during, say, skiing, rugby, football, squash or tennis.

### Glucosamine sulphate and joints

Appropriate physical therapies (eg. physiotherapy, osteopathy, biomechanical assessment and management) have their part to play in such cases. However, from a "nutritional" perspective, a mainstay of what I advise is glucosamine sulphate. This substance is a basic building block in cartilage and other soft tissues such as ligaments and tendons. While not all the research is totally consistent, there is evidence that supplementation with glucosamine sulphate can be effective for the relief of osteoarthritis, including that affecting the knee [1-4]. In practice, I find that glucosamine is generally very effective in improving the function of the knee joint and reducing discomfort. It can even be critical in allowing individuals to retain active, productive lives.

I was therefore interested to read a recent study which looked at the relationship between supplementation with glucosamine sulphate and the risk of requiring a subsequent knee replacement [5]. Knee replacement surgery is usually the final option for individuals suffering from osteoarthritis of the knee who have been unable to find appropriate relief using other means. In theory at least, it seems that glucosamine sulphate may enhance the health of the joint, including its cartilage, and this may lead to someone

being spared surgery. In this study, 275 individuals were followed over a period of time. For the purposes of the analysis, individuals were divided into two groups:

1. Those who in previous studies had taken glucosamine sulphate for at least one year and up to three years
2. Those who in previous studies had taken a placebo (inactive medication)

The participants in this study were followed for an average of five years following discontinuation of the medication or placebo.

### Study shows less knee replacement surgery

The results of this study found:

Those who had previously taken glucosamine were 57 per cent less likely to have a knee replacement compared to those who had taken a placebo.

Those who had previously taken glucosamine used less medication and health resources generally compared to those who had taken a placebo.

The study supports the use of glucosamine sulphate for the treatment of "wear and tear" or osteoarthritis of the knee. In particular, it seems to help keep people off the operating table.

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*Dr John Briffa is a London-based doctor, author and health writer with a special interest in nutrition and natural medicine. Practical advice about all aspects of health and wellbeing can be found at [www.drbriffa.com](http://www.drbriffa.com)*