


## Diving into the self: guided meditation as an integrative practice

## Mergulhando no eu: meditação guiada como prática integrativa

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**ABSTRACT | INTRODUCTION:** Since the 1990s, interest in integrative health approaches has increased worldwide, driven by the Ministry of Health's encouragement of the use of Integrative and Complementary Practices in the SUS. Meditation, one of the most widespread PICs, promotes physical and emotional well-being by training mindfulness in the present moment, and is also a tool for exploring levels of consciousness. **OBJECTIVE:** To report the guided meditation technique, as well as the experience lived through this practice, emphasizing the learning and insights obtained. **EXPERIENCE REPORT:** The exercise of guided meditation with mindfulness principles was applied by during the meeting with Nursing and Dentistry academics members, taking place on September 21, 2023. At first, the meditation began with a focus on breathing, encouraging exploration of the senses, promoting self-perception, paying attention to surrounding sounds and physical sensations, seeking points of bodily support, and cultivating full awareness of immediate sensory experiences. In the second moment, the session included visualizations in search of positive mental images and promotion of self-reflection, with the exercise lasting an average of 1 hour. **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS:** The experience reached varying levels of self-reflection and self-discovery among the participants, but generally contributed to emotional well-being and greater self-perception among those involved in the experience. Furthermore, the inclusion of visualizations and personal goals enriched the experience, resulting in an improvement in emotional well-being and being able to enjoy the perception of rewarding moments in life.

**KEYWORDS:** Meditation. Mindfulness. Complementary Therapies. Health Promotion.

**RESUMO | INTRODUÇÃO:** Desde a década de 1990 o interesse por abordagens de saúde integrativa tem aumentado em proporções mundiais, impulsionado pelo incentivo do Ministério da Saúde à utilização das Práticas Integrativas e Complementares no SUS. A meditação, uma das PICs mais difundidas, promove bem-estar físico e emocional ao treinar a atenção plena no momento presente, sendo também uma ferramenta para explorar níveis de consciência. **OBJETIVO:** Relatar a técnica da meditação guiada, assim como a experiência vivenciada por meio dessa prática enfatizando os aprendizados e os insights obtidos. **RELATO DE EXPERIÊNCIA:** O exercício da meditação guiada com princípios do *mindfulness* foi aplicada durante a reunião com acadêmicas de Enfermagem e Odontologia, ocorrida no dia 21 de setembro de 2023. No primeiro momento a meditação iniciou com foco na respiração, havendo o incentivo para exploração dos sentidos, promovendo a autopercepção, com atenção aos sons ao redor, sensações físicas, buscando-se pontos de apoio corporal, cultivando a consciência plena das experiências sensoriais imediatas. No segundo momento a sessão incluiu visualizações em busca de imagens mentais positivas e promoção da autorreflexão, durando o exercício uma média de 1 hora. **CONSIDERAÇÕES FINAIS:** A experiência atingiu a variados níveis de autorreflexão e autodescoberta dentre os participantes, mas contribuiu, de forma geral, para o bem-estar emocional e maior autopercepção dentre os envolvidos na experiência. Além disso, a inclusão de visualizações e metas pessoais enriqueceu a experiência, ocorrendo uma melhoria no bem-estar emocional podendo desfrutar da percepção de momentos gratificantes nas vidas.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Meditação. *Mindfulness*. Terapias Complementares. Promoção da Saúde.

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## 1. Introduction

Since the 1990s, the use and search for more integrative health approaches has increased worldwide<sup>1</sup>, its growth and visibility occurred mainly with the encouragement of the Ministry of Health regarding the use of Integrative and Complementary Practices (PICs) within the Unified Health System (SUS - Sistema Único de Saúde) with the aim of guaranteeing comprehensiveness, as stipulated by Ordinance No. 971/2006, which published the National Policy on Integrative and Complementary Practices (PNPIC - Política Nacional de Práticas Integrativas e Complementares).<sup>2</sup> From that moment on, the promotion and support for the use of PICs such as herbal medicine, homeopathy, traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) among other complementary health practices legitimized in the SUS, thus expanding the use of its practices.<sup>3</sup> Among TCM practices, meditation as a mental practice stands out as a valuable tool for addressing the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual dimensions of health.<sup>4</sup>

Meditation, of ancient origin and Eastern tradition, is known for several benefits. Etymologically, the word meditation derives from the Latin "*meditare*", which means being in your center, disconnecting from the outside and immersing your attention in yourself.<sup>5</sup> The term mindfulness is an English translation of the word "*sati*" in the Pali language (the original language in which Buddha's teachings were recorded), translated into Portuguese as "full attention". It can be understood as a cognitive/physiological state of presence accessible to anyone through different meditation exercises.<sup>6</sup>

Meditation and mindfulness are closely linked, mutually amplifying their benefits. However, it is important to highlight that mindfulness and meditation are not necessarily the same thing. Although mindfulness practice is a form of meditation, not all meditation necessarily includes mindfulness.<sup>7</sup>

Although they are not necessarily the same thing, we can characterize that mindfulness meditation consists of intentionally paying attention to the present moment, without judgment, and experiencing the now with acceptance. With recent scientific advances, the positive effects of mindfulness practice on the brain have been observed. Imaging allows us to identify the brain areas associated with these effects,

such as happiness, empathy and compassion, which become more active with meditation.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, neuroscientific studies indicate that mindfulness meditation affects specific regions of the central nervous system, involving cognitive functions such as attention, perception, self-regulation, self-monitoring, inhibitory control and memory. Furthermore, it activates functions of the prefrontal cortex, responsible for various aspects of executive functions.

## 2. Objective

In strict compliance, this article describes the experience of the aspects experienced by the authors during a face-to-face meeting in which the advisor introduced the concept and led the formal practice of guided meditation with mindfulness principles. Furthermore, the relevance of scientific research and knowledge of integrative and complementary health practices in the academic context was explored.

## 3. Experience report

This article reports an experience during an academic league meeting composed at the time of a group of 7 people, female, with adequate socioeconomic conditions, with higher education in Nursing and Dentistry courses, and as a whole they reported excitement and anxiety for participation in practice. The meeting took place in September 2023 in a classroom at a private institution in Salvador-BA. It was guided by a professor from the Dentistry course and Advisor from the academic league.

During the meeting, the practice of guided meditation with principles of mindfulness. The environment was carefully prepared, with tatami mats, cushions, soft light and relaxing sounds. To ensure greater safety and effectiveness of the practice, some preconditions were established, such as informed consent and prior knowledge about the practice. After being informed and guided, they were asked to sit comfortably, with their spine erect and their hands resting on their legs.

The meditation began with a focus on breathing, using it as an anchor for the moment gift. Next, participants were encouraged to explore their senses, paying attention to surrounding sounds and physical sensations, and cultivating full awareness of immediate sensory experiences. Thoughts were observed as they arose, without judgment, and participants were instructed to redirect attention to breathing or the present experience, with a conscious exploration of the body to identify areas of tension and comfort, as well as observation of emotions, accepting them without trying to change them.

The meditation session included visualizations to create positive mental images and promote self-reflection. Participants were invited to set personal intentions or goals for the session, generating realistic expectations about the results. The guided meditation lasted approximately two and a half hours, mainly promoting stress reduction, increasing mental clarity, improving emotional well-being and cultivating self-compassion. The practice also helped to notice moments of fulfillment and pleasure, both small and significant. Some participants reported a condition of anxiety due to the moment and accelerated and disorganized thoughts before the practice and, after the session, they reported having experienced different sensations such as lightness of the body, muscular relaxation, full attention and inner peace, a feeling of connection with the moment and the other participants.

#### 4. Final considerations

The experience described in this article reveals the importance of Integrative and Complementary Practices (PICs) in the health area, especially after the integration of PICs into the Unified Health System (SUS) through the National Policy on Integrative and Complementary Practices (PNPIC).

Experiential learning during the Academic League meeting demonstrates how guided meditation with mindfulness principles can be an effective tool in the ability to promote various holistic benefits such as the development of full consciousness, promotion and improvement of physical and mental well-being, as well as the exploration of spirituality. The practice allowed us to reach proportions of self-reflection and

self-discovery, the power of the now, immersion and surrender to the current moment, bringing happiness, and even being able to control symptoms that haunt us. Thus, it also contributed to the emotional well-being and self-development of those involved in the experience at various levels, with the inclusion of visualizations and personal goals, it enriched the moment with the occurrence of improvement in emotional well-being in order to enjoy the perception of moments rewarding lives.

In view of what was found, this article emphasizes the importance of integrating knowledge of meditation guided by Mindfulness in the academic context, highlighting the relevance of scientific research in this area. In short, the experience of guided meditation highlights its potential for improving health and well-being, while also highlighting its role in the academic environment. It is clear that meditation has much to offer in promoting a more comprehensive and holistic healthcare system.

#### Author contributions

Vasconcellos GR, Silva JAB, Góes MES, Valença RV, Duarte SAA, Salomão MFL participated in the conception or design of the work, analysis and interpretation of data. Salomão MFL and Vasconcellos GR participated in the review of the intellectual content. Vasconcellos GR, Silva JAB, Góes MES, Valença RV, Duarte SAA, Salomão MFL approved the final version of the article and agreed to be responsible for all aspects of the work, ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are adequately investigated and resolved.

#### Conflicts of interest

No financial, legal or political conflicts involving third parties (government, private companies and foundations, etc.) have been declared for any aspect of the submitted work (including, but not limited to, grants and financing, advisory board participation, study design, preparation manuscript, statistical analysis, etc.).

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