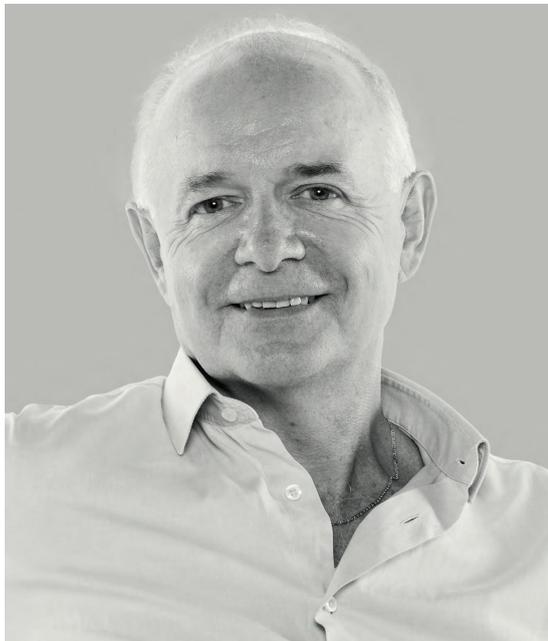


Meditation: “It can be an effective substitute for hypnotics”

Le Figaro Santé | Jan. / March. 2019 |

By Laurent Giordano



Five questions to Dr Lionel Coudron, creator of the Institut de YogaThérapie. Meditation is practiced there to fight against sleeping disorders. And it works.

How can meditation help us sleep better?

The majority of sleep disorders are the result of anxiety, which feeds on fears and worries. This feeling of insecurity is at the root of most problems to fall asleep or waking up early, according to each patient's individual modalities. The first thing to do is to restore a sense of security. Two main meditation techniques can help us do this: visualization/identification meditation and observation meditation. The first is the simplest to use to go to sleep: in the evening, sitting by the bedside or lying down, it is a question, for example, for me, of imagining a place where I feel

good, a beautiful beach, a lakeside... I close my eyes, I breathe slowly through my nose, I see this landscape, I feel the water on my feet ... I plunge into this universe, and end up imagining that I am in warm water, light... These visualizations will gradually give me more confidence and security and, in the end, calm me down. In the long run, the brain will develop positive thought patterns, because it doesn't distinguish between what it fantasizes and what it actually experiences: fantasy is integrated as an experience. The benefit will be lasting.

Observation meditation, on the other hand, aims to teach me to become more aware of my breathing, thoughts, emotions or sensations - to learn how to become an observer of myself, from a distance. If, for example, I get my throat tightened, my neck stretched... I will be able to remove these problems by stretching and, why not, then move on to a visualization meditation.

Is it useful to practice yoga postures in the evening?

Yes, it is good to practice postures to relax the body and promote a state of psychic calm. But breathing and postures bring much more. Some of them, while relieving tension, reinforce the feeling of security. Closed postures are to be preferred; for example, yoga mudra: legs crossed, hands on knees, I bend forward, head towards the ground. Or even the half-bridge posture (on the back, bring the heels closer to the buttocks, raise the pelvis) followed by a supported shoulderstand and a plow

posture. These postures send a calming message to the brain and act on the diaphragm and breathing, which naturally slows down. Slow breathing has been shown to enhance the activation of the parasympathetic nervous system and its calming effect. Gestures must therefore be slow, synchronised with slow, deep breathing.

Can we learn on our own or do we need to consult?

Many students of "classic" yoga classes feel good and sleep better after a class. For occasional sleep disorders, a simple regular practice in a group can therefore suffice, and to go further, practice evening yoga as we have just defined it. With my team we have developed a website: www.le-vrai-nom-du-bonheur.fr - which offers guided meditations associated with postures. For more serious problems and/or for all those who are not very familiar with these practices, a consultation is recommended to better understand the patient's problems and to teach him/her the techniques and instructions. The sessions are often recorded to allow the patient to work at home. In three or four sessions, one week apart, followed by three more monthly sessions, excellent results can be achieved if the patient follows the prescription.

Isn't it useless to meditate if we don't fix certain bad habits?

Yes, absolutely, but precisely, yoga also allows an attitude of benevolence towards oneself and one's environment. Yogatherapy is therefore accompanied by advice on how to eat well, for example, and its regular practice makes it easier to find one's natural biorhythms. Thus, evening yoga calms us down, slows down our cardio-respiratory activity, lowers our temperature... so many factors that make us fall asleep. And in the morning, a simple salutation to the sun, a dynamic sequence of postures, warms and energizes our body. The amplitude of the differences in body temperature between the evening and the morning is one of the pillars of good sleep and good health.

What are the contraindications?

Any mind-body therapy can burst bubbles of emotion, as it frees us from physical and psychic tensions. However, during consultations, yogatherapists know how to deal with this phenomenon and, in general, how to take advantage of it. It is also very easy to learn how to deal with anxiety that can arise during meditation by stretching or breathing on one's own. In short, there is nothing problematic, it is in no way similar to the damage that can be caused by the regular use of hypnotics. Yoga and meditation are excellent alternatives to these drugs, which should be avoided over the long term.