

# ACTUALIZE

*Presents*

## **"In the Moment"**

(Stress management through hypnosis & meditation)

*A program to integrate the calming and beneficial practice of Meditation in your live.*

Rick Pitts - founder of Actualize, a holistic wellness program combining elements of fitness, focused meditation, and bodywork to help clients overcome obstacles and achieve life goals. As a certified hypno-therapist and practitioner of Dzogchen (a form of meditation which develops mindful presence) Rick has united these two techniques to develop a unique, six hour seminar allowing anyone incorporate the calming and beneficial practice of Meditation in their routine.

As a fitness trainer, Rick observed that most clients needed more than education to overcome addictive behaviors. After all, people eat a box of donuts because they are trying to fill some psychological need, not because they are hungry and certainly not because they don't know it will make them gain weight. He understood that, real and lasting change had to be supported by tools to deal with impulses, and overcome ingrained thought processes. Essentially, he recognized that the ability to quiet the mind and master the thinking process, which he experienced in his own Meditation practice was exactly what help his clients needed to overcome their unhealthy habits.

Not only did his research confirm that Meditation could help achieve fitness goals, but it has proven beneficial for a host of health concerns and stress-related complaints. (See Appendix #1 for studies showing the effectiveness of Meditation in reducing stress and stress-related complaints.) Research shows that a practice of Meditation can:

- **Lower Blood Pressure**
- **Reduce Risk of Heart Disease**
- **Lower Cholesterol**
- **Help Weight Loss**
- **Reduce Anxiety**
- **Help to Quit Smoking**
- **Increase Productivity**
- **Lower Risks of Some Cancers**
- **Boost Immune System Responses**
- **Alleviate Headaches and Chronic Pain**
- **Improve Sleep Patterns**

While researching the healthful benefits of Meditation, Rick also discovered the high cost – medical and lost productivity – of stress and stress-related ailments. (See Appendix #2 citing some studies showing stress-related ailments and their costs.)

Through his research, Rick recognized the need for offering help to individuals to begin a practice of Meditation and reap its benefits. Then he developed an innovative method, using hypnosis techniques, to help overcome common obstacles and enter easily into the practice.

In his practice as a hypno-therapist, Rick had developed powerful guided imagery techniques to help clients lose weight, stop smoking and reduce stress. As he learned more about the meditative state of mind and its similarity to the hypnotic state, Rick began to use power of

hypnosis to help clients reach a calm, Meditative state. The result: Rick designed his unique seminar "*In The Moment*" to help anyone learn the techniques and reap the benefits from a practice of Meditation.

## **The need for better stress management tools:**

Today, more than ever, people are experiencing stress and anxiety.

International terrorism, economic climates, crime, work pressures and health concerns - from the global to the personal, individuals are feeling overwhelmed.

Studies show that when we feel stressed and anxious, our health suffers. Depression, insomnia, backaches and even immune system weaknesses are some of the health issues associated with increased stress. In terms of medical costs, lost productivity and our quality of life, recent studies show the high price of stress in our society.

Unfortunately, achieving peace of mind in today's media-blitzed environment is unimaginable for a lot of people. From the constant bombardment of news, Madison Avenue images and our hectic work schedules, we find inner peace hard to achieve.

Rather than seeking to find quiet within, many turn to external "comforts" like over-indulging in food, alcohol, drugs, work, sex or even mindless channel-surfing. These behaviors may temporarily "tune out" the perception of stress, but do nothing to alleviate the underlying anxieties and the harm they cause.

*ACTUALIZE*, an established mind and body fitness center in Carytown, is responding to the need for better tools to manage stress and find peace of mind by offering its unique, two-day seminar "In the Moment," instructing participants in Meditation practices and offering techniques to overcome the common obstacles to a continued practice.

## **Meditation Produces Relaxation**

Typically, we function at a level of consciousness referred to as the *beta* range of brain activity; in this state, brain waves range between 14-33 vibrations cycles per second (C.P.S.), as measured by electroencephalographs (EEGs). Periods of stress - in which we experience pain, anger, fright or joy - can result in 30 C.P.S. or even higher. Meditation actually produces measurable physiological changes; EEGs show that Meditation slows brain waves to 8-12 C.P.S., the *alpha* state.

The lower *alpha* frequency states attained during Meditation are characterized by relaxation, a slowing of the heart rate and respiration. This *alpha* state seems to allow a selective focusing of attention, and we may experience this level of activity when we become engrossed in a book, or are working on a project. If we can allow ourselves to relax even more, the brain waves slow to between 4-7 vibrations C.P.S. and we enter the *theta* wave length. This is a consciousness just above sleep. In fact, each of us enters this state each night before we drift off to sleep and each morning as we awaken. Scientist, writers, inventors and other creative thinkers are often in this state of reverie when they reach intuitive leaps of realization.

## **Relaxation Produces Health Benefits**

Meditation produces the relaxed state of mind that has been proven to reduce a host of stress-related complaints (Appendix #1.)

With the productivity and health benefits of a Meditation practice, why doesn't everyone meditate? At first, the practice may seem uncomfortable, strange or foreign.

*"In the Moment"* offers a unique approach – incorporating instruction, practice and powerful guided imagery techniques - to help individuals achieve a beneficial Meditation practice.

In initial attempts at a Meditation practice, we commonly find that the mind races, finding ourselves trapped in thoughts and stories about our lives. Or, we may notice aches and pains from the unfamiliar posture. The initial distractions may seem insurmountable, but in reality we have simply become aware of the process. The constant clamor of thoughts drives us; it is the stuff of compulsion, depressions and unhappiness. Recognizing our erratic and chaotic thinking process is a good first step.

When we can stay with a practice of Meditation, the mind begins to settle and we can develop a new inner peace, "oneness" or "spaciousness." Unfortunately, many people find it difficult to stick with the practice long enough to attain the goals. People can become frustrated in a few sessions and decide that the practice of Meditation isn't for them.

## **Hypnosis Can Facilitate a Meditation Practice**

As a certified hypno-therapist, a practitioner of *Dzogchen* Meditation and founder of ACTUALIZE, Rick Pitts designed his seminar *"In the Moment"* to introduce participants to the form and practice of Meditation by using the power of guided imagery and hypnosis techniques to help them overcome common initial barriers.

With EEGs, researchers have observed *alpha* and *theta* brainwave patterns during hypnosis, patterns similar to those during meditation.

Reaching the deeper levels of consciousness are essential to the success of hypnosis because as we enter into the *alpha/theta* brain wave state, the critical factor - that part of the conscious mind that evaluates - shuts down. In this state, the participant is receptive to suggestions supporting new, beneficial habits. Clients have quit smoking, reduced stress and changed poor eating habits with their subconscious enlisted as an ally.

In the case of facilitating Meditation, the suggestions allow participants' thoughts to slow, and develop inner spaciousness. They make a connection with a deeper, calm, peaceful nature. Also, while participants are in this state, a post-hypnotic suggestion will facilitate access to this state with a simple breathing exercise - helping them support a practice of Meditation on their own.

How, do hypnosis and Meditation differ? If there were no difference, there would be no need to practice Meditation. One could simply use a recorded hypnosis session to help achieve the benefits of Meditation. However, this is not the case; hypnosis is a guided process in which the therapist helps the client to enter into the state and to gradually relax. In hypnosis, there is a clear purpose. In Meditation, the goal is to achieve “oneness” - a connection with the intrinsic nature of ourselves – and then to integrate that oneness with every moment of our waking lives. That feeling of “oneness” is what produces the profound effects on our health and the feeling of well-being and inner peace.

A fundamental change in our self-perception – realizing inner peace - is the fruit of Meditation; hypnosis is the powerful tool to help support and sustain a practice of Meditation.

By experiencing “oneness” - knowing our true nature, mastering our fears, calming our thoughts and experiencing deep relaxation - we can improve our health and enjoy peace of mind despite a demanding, hectic world. *“In TheMoment”* offers a unique technique for a smooth, easy transition to a healthful, calming, beneficial Meditation practice.

## **“Realizing Inner Peace” – The Six Hour Seminar:**

### **Part One**

(Approximately 3 hours)

Brief Introduction & Overview of the Seminar

Meditation Posture

Orientation to Hypnosis and Meditation

Hypnosis:

- Progressive relaxation induction
- Suggestions to support meditation
- Post-hypnotic suggestion to facilitate meditation

Short break

Discussion:

The Post-Hypnotic Suggestion

Meditation posture exercise - review and adjust

Quieting the Mind: introduction to 3 elements of focus

- On an object
- Mantra
- Observation of the breath

Meditation: Three 5-minute sessions with breaks

Q/A about meditation session

Discussion:

- Realization of oneness (emptiness)
- Who are we?
- Searching for the ultimate self
- The Ultimate Goal: to know yourself and to understand your true nature.

## Part Two

(Approximately 3 hours)

Brief review of Day One

Hypnosis session

Discussion:

- Seeking Internal Truth: The spiritual journey
- Realization Of Truth: The Flow of Compassion

Exercise:

- Meditation: Three 5-minute sessions with breaks
- Meditation posture - review & discuss **issues** and problems

Mantra Handout

Discussion:

Types of meditation

- *Shine*: Inward-focussed
- *Vipassanna*: wisdom, realizing oneness

Making your meditation a cause for Enlightenment

- Liberation, a practical accomplishment
- Thinking is stressful.

Meditation: Three 5-minute sessions with breaks

Q/A about meditation session

Discussion:

*Bhodichetta*: The desire to benefit others

Integrated practice: Meditation

“Dedication of Merit”

- Letting go of the Ego
- Attaining fearless pure action

Spaciousness: The Power to Choose

Next steps

Reading list

Meditation sessions at [Actualize](#)

Daily practice

## **RICK PITTS:**



**Graduate Magna Cum Laude, BS -**  
*Virginia Commonwealth University*  
**Registered Clinical Hypnotherapist -**  
*American Board of Hypnotherapy*  
**Certified Fitness Trainer -**  
*American Council on Exercise*  
**Certified Massage Therapist -**  
*Virginia Board of Nursing*  
**2000 Mid Atlantic Champion, Masters Tall -**  
*NABBA*

**In 1996, Rick founded Actualize (a holistic fitness program) in Carytown, helping hundreds of men and women overcome the obstacles standing between them and their health and fitness goals.**

Using concerted techniques including exercise, diet, meditation, hypno-therapy, and massage therapy, Rick has helped his clients to reverse chronic muscular imbalances, identify and change limiting self-concepts, and achieve profound and lasting shifts to healthy lifestyles.

A practitioner of Dzogchen (a Buddhist meditation focusing on present moment awareness) since 1998, Rick has received teaching and instruction from Tenzin Rimpoche of the *Bon* Tradition, and from Sogyal Rimpoche of the *Nigma* tradition.

## **References**

In addition to private groups conducted at Actualize, Rick recently completed an executive training session of “*In the Moment*” for the upper management of Virginia Blood Services, and in a clinical environment at Fan Free Clinic. Besides receiving many positive comments, most importantly all of the participants have begun to work on developing a Meditation practice. The long-term benefits of this program are incalculable; in the short-term, participants remark that they are sleeping better and are using the techniques to reduce anxiety in a variety of situations. One participant reported that she was able to overcome her anxiety over flying by using the techniques she learned in the seminar. Participants are finding that they are better able to manage anger and deal more easily with difficult situations.

The following have attended this seminar and have kindly allowed Rick to use them as a reference.

Bob Carden, PHD, President - *VA Blood Services*

Mac Pence, President *Pence Automotive Group*

Stuart Martin, DDS, *Practicing Dentistry in Richmond*

*Margaret Suspenski RN, PHD, McQuire Veterans Administration Hospital, Nursing instructor, Primary Care Nurse, Adjunct Faculty VCU*

*Tony Mangiafico PHD, Therapist Fan Free Clinic*

## Appendix #1: The Effectiveness of Meditation

1) Meditation significantly controls high blood pressure at levels comparable to widely used prescription drugs, and without the side effects of drugs.

*Hypertension, AMA Medical Journal*

2) Meditators are able to reduce chronic pain by more than 50%, while increasing daily function and markedly improving their moods, even 4 years after the completion of an 8-week training course.

*Jon Kabat-Zinn, M.D. Stress Reduction Clinic, University of Massachusetts*

3) Seventy five percent of long-term insomniacs who have been trained in relaxation and meditation can fall asleep within 20 minutes of going to bed.

*Dr. Gregg Jacobs, Psychologist, Harvard*

4) Meditation decreases oxygen consumption, heart rate, respiratory rate, and blood pressure, and increases the intensity of alpha, theta, and delta brain waves - the opposite of the physiological changes that occur during the stress response.

*Herbert Benson, M.D. Harvard Medical School*

5) Relaxation therapies are effective in treating chronic pain, and can markedly ease the pain of low back problems, arthritis, and headaches.

*National Institutes of Health, 1996*

6) Reducing stress can dramatically reduce heart disease. In a five-year study of heart disease patients, those who learned to manage stress reduced their risk of having another heart attack by 74%, compared with patients receiving medication only. Reducing mental stress also proved more beneficial than getting exercise.

*Dr. James Blumenthal, Duke University, 1997*

7) Twenty-eight people with high levels of blocked arteries and high risk of heart attack were placed a program with regular practice of meditation, yoga, a low-fat vegetarian diet, and exercise. Twenty people in the control group received conventional medical care endorsed by the AMA. At the end of a year, most of the experimental group reported that their chest pains had virtually disappeared; for 82% of the patients, arterial clogging had reversed. Those who were sickest at the start showed the most improvement. The control group had an increase in chest pain and arterial blockage worsened. (Follow-up studies suggest that the stress-reduction element may be the most significant factor in achieving these results.)

*Dr. Dean Ornish, San Francisco Medical School, University of California, Lancet Journal*

8) Two groups were compared: meditators and non-meditators. The meditators were less anxious and neurotic, more spontaneous, independent, self-confident, empathetic, and less fearful of death.

*Atlantic Monthly, May, 1991*

9) Twenty out of 22 anxiety-prone people showed a 60% improvement in anxiety levels following an eight-week course in meditation.

*University of Massachusetts*

10) In a recent study, 77% of individuals with high levels of stress were able to cool down - lower their blood pressure and cholesterol levels - simply by training themselves to stay calm.

*Health, October, 1994*

11) Women with severe PMS showed a 58% improvement in their symptoms after five months of daily meditation.

*Health, September, 1995*

12) Meditation may slow aging. A study found that people who had been meditating for more than five years were biologically 12 to 15 years younger than non-meditators.

*International Journal of Neuroscience, 1992.*

*[From Health News & Review, 1993, Vol. 3 Issue 2]*

## **Appendix #2: The Effects and High Cost of Stress**

1) \$200 billion a year is lost to industry from stress-related ailments.

*George Pfeiffer, WorkCare Group*

2) Seventy five - 90% of employee visits to hospitals are for ailments linked to stress.

*American Institute of Stress*

3) Stress is linked to the following illnesses: hypertension, heart attacks, diabetes, asthma, chronic pain, allergies, headache, backache, various skins disorders, cancer, immune system weakness, decreases in the number of white blood cells and changes in their function.

*Nation's Business, December, 1994*

4) Chronic pain, hypertension, and headaches—all stress-related ailments—account for 54% of all job absences.

*Alternative Therapies Journal, 1996*

5) Thirty percent of adults report high job stress nearly every day. One study reported that more than a third of respondents were considering changing work because of job stress.

*Northwestern National Life Insurance, 1991*

6) Those who reported a history of workplace stress over the past 10 years developed colon and rectal cancers at 5.5 times the rate of the control group.

*Joseph Courtney, UCLA School of Public Health, Epidemiology, September, 1994*

7) Stress is more powerful than diet in influencing cholesterol levels. Several studies-including one of medical students around exam time, and another of accountants during tax season-have shown significant increases in cholesterol levels during stressful events, when there was little change in diet.

*Dr. Paul Rosch, Professor of Medicine, New York Medical College*

8) High levels of stress cause nerve factor growth (NGF), which hinders the ability of disease-fighting cells to ward off infections, suppressing the immune system.

*Reported in Psychology Today, January, 1996*

9) Four hundred people were intentionally exposed to common-cold viruses. Those who scored highest on a test of stressful life events were more than twice as likely to develop colds after exposure than people who scored lowest.

*Dr. Sheldon Cohen, Carnegie Mellon University, National Institute of Health Conference*

10) Severe stress is one of the most potent risk factors for stroke - more so than high blood pressure - even 50 years after the initial trauma. In a study of 556 veterans of WWII, the rate of stroke among those who had been prisoners of war was 8 times higher than among those not captured.

*Lawrence Brass, M.D. Yale Medical School*

11) Those already suffering from high levels of atherosclerotic plaque/coronary heart disease will experience even more constriction of blood vessels when under stress. On average, the most clogged arteries constricted an additional 24% when the subject was experiencing stress, while the healthy vessels (in the same subject) remained unchanged. Healthy vessels can handle the stress, but the damaged ones have lost their capacity to adapt.

*Alan Young, M.D. Cardiologist, Harvard Medical*

12) Epinephrine, released by adrenal glands in response to stress, triggers blood platelets (the cells responsible for repairing blood vessels) to secrete large amounts of a substance called ATP. In large amounts, ATP can trigger a heart attack or stroke by causing blood vessels to rapidly narrow, thus cutting off the blood flow.

*Thomas Pickering, M.D. Cardiologist, New York Hospital, Cornell Medical Center*

13) In a study of 100 people with rheumatoid arthritis, levels of prolactin were twice as high among those reporting high degrees of interpersonal stress than among those not stressed.

Prolactin migrates to joints where it initiates a cascade of events leading to swelling and pain.

*Kathleen Matt, M.D., Arizona State University*