

# MEDITATION: the cure for IED

I'm an addict. Addicted to meditation. The calm and peace I experience – what bliss! No, I don't stare at a candle or chant words not found in Webster's Dictionary. All I do is simply enjoy the moment, allow my mind to focus on the pleasures of the present and forget the past and future.

I'd never attended a meditation retreat, but a new friend invited me to join her. My daily meditation practices are brief – about 10 to 15 minutes perhaps twice a day. I feel

it's enough. It is certainly sufficient to improve my mood and mental health. But several 45-minute meditation sessions over a whole weekend? Was I ready for that?

Computers and newspapers are banned on this retreat. Ditto for cell phones, pagers and walkmans. The day before I left, I was already shaking from withdrawal symptoms just thinking of being away from my computer. On the morning of the retreat I savoured reading my last newspaper. In the headlines, researchers have named a new disease that seems to be increasingly prevalent today: Intermittent Explosive Disorder (IED). IED involves multiple outbursts that are out of proportion to the situation. This includes temper outbursts like throwing or breaking objects and even road rage. It seemed like a good time to leave the city.

**Day One of the retreat:** *So quiet here. No phones, no television, no need to rely on my car. The*



Well, I have another theory; I call it FBS (Fried Brain Syndrome). It's caused by circuit overload. If we're not wolfing down a fast lunch while slaving at our computers, or text messaging while watching the news, we're mastering the art of driving-talking-thinking-juggling our cell phones. We admiringly call this multi-tasking. But it's actually information overload. Really, how much can we absorb and process all at once?

**Day Two of the retreat:** *I had the deepest sleep last night. Meals are simple, but they're ready when I want them. And it's so nice not having to hurry and get ready for a client. I could get used to this "not working" thing too. Perhaps I should live like a Buddhist monk and be a minimalist. Simplify my life. Get rid of the toys so I don't have to work so much to pay for them – toys I don't have the chance to appreciate anyway, because I'm too busy working to pay for them.*

*hosts of our retreat have rented accommodations at the Westminster Abbey in Mission. At this isolated monastery, the spectacular views and meandering nature trails allow us to enjoy the beauty of creation around us. I'm spotting animals everywhere. The chorus of birds is our only music. Other than crows, I don't hear birds or see animals too often in the city – except on television in cellular phone commercials.*

Meanwhile, back in the city with the IED... IED?

Meanwhile, back in the 24-7 world... Businesses stay open every day, most of them around the clock. That will soon apply to holidays like Christmas and New Year's as well, thanks to aggressive marketers and our insatiable need to accumulate massive quantities of "stuff". Remember when businesses were closed on Sundays? Now we can't get away from our jobs. Cell phones and Blackberries – even our computers – go with us everywhere. In addition we struggle to meet our health needs and improve our image to meet our cultural requirements of how we should look and act.

**Day Three of the retreat:** *No judgments. We are who we are. Serene and happy. Now this is living. All we've been doing is eating, sleeping, walking in nature, meditating and listening to our hosts speak about being kind to ourselves and others. Today's our last day at the retreat. Jeeze, I dread the thought of leaving. Maybe that's how monks came to be: a guy goes into the woods for a holiday. Loves it and decides to stay. His clothes eventually get too dirty and worn. He drapes a blanket around himself. Presto. A monk.*

Well, I'm back at home now joining the rest of the human race with IED. Have you got IED (or FBS)? Here's the cure: Relax and calm your mind. Take your time eating healthful, simple meals. Go for long walks in nature. Be kind, patient and compassionate to others. Hang out with positive-thinking, supportive friends – the kind of friends who just may invite you to a meditation retreat.

Ahhhh ... bliss!

Curious about the type of meditation retreat I attended? Visit [www.vipassanabc.ca](http://www.vipassanabc.ca)

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