

All About The Balance

By Anna Franklin

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Balance at the University of Tampa is a health and wellness organization led by fellow peers that focuses on relaxing, restoring and rejuvenating the mind and body. They host different events around the University of Tampa in hopes of helping students achieve these goals. Events that they host consist of Mediation Monday, Yoga, Tarot card readings, self-care nights, spa days, goat yoga in the park, tabling events, energy wellness expos, and much more.

My experience at Mediation Monday was remarkable and rememberable. Me and about thirty other UT students, male and females of all different grades, had the opportunity to be led in a relaxing meditation circle led by Senior Debbie Wallack, who is also the President of Balance for the last three years. The event took place in the Sykes Chapel and Center for Faith and Values, which provides its own meditation room, located on the campus at eight pm. The events are open to any students, there is no need to sign up, or be a previous member of the club, it is a very welcoming and inviting atmosphere for anyone who needs a bit of mind relaxation or is just curious and wanted to check it out. They supply blankets and mats for anyone who is new or unprepared.

During this event Debbie taught us how to focus on breathing and clearing your mind free of any negative, harmful, or distracting thoughts. By using the 3, 4, 5 counting and breathing method, you feel a positive sense of freedom and can focus on connecting with your body instead of life's stressors. She plays light and peaceful music and lets her soothing voice lead you through motions that connect to specific body parts. She directs your minds and thoughts to a place where they can no longer bother you, leaving you feeling full of serenity.

“The feeling is indescribable, being a busy college student, you do not have time to think about and connect to your body in this kind of way. I feel surprisingly relaxed and refreshed, I would recommend attending to anyone who is having an overwhelming week or needs a refresh,” said Sophia Franz a sophomore at the University of Tampa, who was attending her first balance meeting. Her quote is spot on accurate, it is hard to find the right words on how helpful this meditation feels until you can experience it yourself.

As mentioned in this meeting, meditation has been shown to offer many benefits. Although it's well known as a technique to reduce stress and anxiety, it has also been shown that it may also help enhance your mood, promote healthy sleep patterns, and boost cognitive skills, while enhancing self-awareness. These are all major benefits, especially to busy hard working college students. Meditation Monday only lasted about thirty minutes long, with all these positive benefits it is circuitous to take advantage of these free on campus events, or at least to spread the word if you see someone who is struggling.

Maya Critchfield, senior director of marketing and social media accounts for balance said, “I love seeing the difference that meditation has made in my own personal life along with others. Part of the reason why I joined this club was because I love watching people grow and develop, especially mentally. I always recommend for people to give it a chance just once to have the personal experience, it never hurts to try.”

To end the meeting Debbie instructs certain ways to “bring your body back” out of the trance by slowing circling your ankles and stretching, cracking, and massaging your body back into realization. After the meditation was completed, they held a social event outside of the chapel, giving everyone a chance to relate on how they felt, share encouraging words, and get to know

each other. Best part of all, they offered donuts to every participant, it felt like a reward, and it was super generous of them, not to mention absolutely delicious.

This experience was overall inspiring and motivating. It made me come to the realization that I do need to have a better relationship with my mind and body and take time to relax during the busy work weeks, along with accepting the fact that it is okay to stress. But it is also completely acceptable to take time off and relaxing is not a lazy or wrong thing. If you have been recently overwhelmed, over anything in life, not just midterms or maybe you just like the sound of donuts. In my opinion it is worth taking a half an hour out of your day to check out one of the events that balance holds.

If you are interested in attending an event yourself, or have any follow up questions, you can find more information and even send them a direct message on their Instagram page @livewellut or @balance.ut. They are also easy to reach at any time through their school email @balance.ut.edu.



Picture caption- Both images above were captured at Meditation Monday. Upon entering I asked everyone in the room if it was bothersome if I stood in the back taking notes, along with asking permission to quote them and snap some photos during the event. Each person gestured that it was fine with them. These images represent the peaceful, dark, calming atmosphere that the meditation room provides you with. The warm colors, dim lights, comfortable mats and blankets set the tone of the program and help you focus on maintaining an empty mind and on the phrases Debbie explains. The leader of the meditation and main subject of these photos is Debbie (in the flannel) who is President of the group. Karina Dyakov, sophomore director of programming for balance, said, “Debbie is an amazing President for balance. Ut, we are so lucky to have her, she does so much for this group from being a great leader to planning all the events, she always puts us and balance first in her busy life schedule. We are going to miss her so much after she graduates this semester, she is irreplaceable.”