

# MEDITATION RESEARCH + HEADLINES

Compiled & edited by Kristoffer Carter, This Epic Life

In 2015, Harvard-affiliated Mass General Hospital found that practicing relaxation-response techniques such as meditation and yoga could reduce the need for healthcare services by as much as 43%.

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Stahl, J., Benson, H. et al. (2015). Relaxation Response and Resiliency Training and Its Effect on Healthcare Resource Utilization. PLoS ONE 10(10): doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0140212

A 2008 study found that in one company 24 subjects who practiced a basic meditation technique for 8 months significantly grew in their expression of leadership skills, as defined by the Leadership Practices Inventory.

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McCollum, B., (2008). Leadership development and self-development: an empirical study. Career Development International, Vol. 4 Iss: 3, pp.149 – 154

The University of Westminster found in a 2014 study of CEOs that meditation training significantly enhanced overall self-confidence, as well as inspiring a shared vision and demonstrating moral intelligence.

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Amar, AD. et al. (2014) Academy of Management Proceedings. Effect of Meditation on Self-Perception of Leadership Skills: A control group study of CEOs. 2014:1 14282;



Ever wondered why mindfulness meditation makes you feel more focused and Zen? It's because it helps the brain to have better control over processing pain and emotions, specifically through the control of cortical alpha rhythms (which play a role in what senses our minds are attentive to).

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Kerr, C, Sacchet, MD, Lawar, S., Moore, C., Jones, S. (2013). Mindfulness starts with the body: somatosensory attention and top-down modulation of cortical alpha rhythms in mindfulness meditation. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*.  
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2013.00012>

The health benefits of mindfulness can be boiled down to four elements, according to a Perspectives on Psychological Science study:

- 1) Body awareness, 2) Self-awareness,
- 3) Regulation of emotion, and
- 4) Regulation of attention.

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Hölzel, B.K., Lazar, S., Gard, T., Schuman-Olivier, Z., Vago, D., Ott, U. (2011). How Does Mindfulness Meditation Work? Proposing Mechanisms of Action from a Conceptual and Neural Perspective.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691611419671>

In a 2013 study from the University of Utah, people who reported higher mindfulness experienced lower activation at bedtime, which benefits sleep quality and their future ability to manage stress.

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(2013) Rau, HK., Williams, P. The University of Utah. Better Living through Mindfulness. Study connects traits of mindfulness to emotional well-being.



Even the most level-headed person would be rattled by being trapped in a flooded cave for over two weeks without an escape route. The Thai soccer coach rescued last Summer from just such a perilous situation, had to keep calm while caring for 12 boys. Before coaching The Wild Boars, the 25-year old coach spent a decade at a Buddhist monastery in northern Thailand, learning how to quiet his mind through meditation, the Associated Press reported. Last Summer, a soccer team of 12 boys, ranging in age from 11 to 16, were trapped by monsoon floods in cave in northern Thailand. The group spent 10 days completely cut off from the world before they were discovered on July 2, and rescued 5 days later.

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Kuruvilla, Carol. (July 2018) "Meditation May Have Helped Trapped Thai Soccer Team, Reports Suggest". Huffington Post. Also reported in Business Insider, Independent.uk, and AP News.  
[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/meditation-thai-soccer-team\\_us\\_5b4786c5e4b0e7c958f9193a](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/meditation-thai-soccer-team_us_5b4786c5e4b0e7c958f9193a)

Mindfulness is not only associated with feeling less stressed, it's also linked with decreased levels of the stress hormone cortisol. A 2013 study in the Health Psychology journal shows an association between increased mindfulness and decreased levels of the stress hormone.

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Self-reported mindfulness and cortisol during a Shamatha meditation retreat. By Jacobs, T.L., Shaver, P.R., Epel, E. S., Zanesco, A.P., Aichele. Health Psychology, Vol 32(10), Oct 2013, 1104-1109. <http://psycnet.apa.org/buy/2013-09641-001>

Meditation Boosts Compassion. A 2013 study from Northeastern University and Harvard University researchers shows that meditation can improve compassion and do-gooder behavior. The new findings are published in the journal Psychological Science. "The truly surprising aspect of this finding is that meditation made people willing to act virtuous — to help another who was suffering — even in the face of a norm not to do so."

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Condon, Paul & Desbordes, Gaelle & B Miller, Willa & Desteno, David. (2013). Meditation Increases Compassionate Response to Suffering. Psychological science. 24. 10.1177/0956797613485603.



Research shows that meditation leads to neuroplasticity, which is defined as the brain's ability to change, structurally and functionally, on the basis of environmental input. For much of the last century, scientists believed that the brain essentially stopped changing after adulthood. But research by University of Wisconsin neuroscientist Richard Davidson has shown that experienced meditators exhibit high levels of gamma wave activity and display an ability -- continuing after the meditation session has attended -- to NOT GET STUCK on a particular stimulus. That is, they're automatically able to control their thoughts and reactivity.

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(2008) Davidson RJ, Lutz A. Buddha's Brain: Neuroplasticity and Meditation. IEEE signal processing magazine. 2008;25 (1):176-174.

A 2005 study on American men and women who meditated a mere 40 minutes a day showed that they had thicker cortical walls than non-meditators. What this meant is that their brains were aging at a slower rate. Cortical thickness is also associated with decision making, attention and memory.

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Lazar SW, Kerr CE, Wasserman RH, et al. Meditation experience is associated with increased cortical thickness. Neuroreport. 2005; 16 (17):1893-1897.

A 2014 study conducted by Wake Forest Baptist University found that meditation could reduce pain intensity by 40 percent and pain unpleasantness by 57 percent. Morphine and other pain-relieving drugs typically show a pain reduction of 25 percent. Meditation works by reducing activity in the somatosensory cortex and increasing activity in other areas of the brain.

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(2015) A.L. Adler-Neal, M.P.H., R.E. Wells, M.D., J.C. Eisenach, M.D., of Wake Forest University; L.M. Mindfulness Meditation Provides Opioid-Free Pain Relief. [https://www.wakehealth.edu/News-Releases/2016/Mindfulness\\_Meditation\\_Provides\\_Opioid-Free\\_Pain\\_Relief,\\_Study\\_Finds.htm](https://www.wakehealth.edu/News-Releases/2016/Mindfulness_Meditation_Provides_Opioid-Free_Pain_Relief,_Study_Finds.htm)



In 2008, Dr. Randy Zusman, a doctor at the Massachusetts General Hospital, asked patients suffering from high blood pressure to try a meditation-based relaxation program for three months. After meditating regularly for three months, 40 of the 60 patients showed significant drops in blood pressure levels and were able to reduce some of their medication. The reason? Relaxation results in the formation of nitric oxide which opens up your blood vessels.

<sup>1</sup>To Lower Blood Pressure, Open Up and Say 'Om', NPR, August 21, 2008  
<http://www.npr.org/2008/08/21/93796200/to-lower-blood-pressure-open-up-and-say-om>

Meditation may be more restorative than sleep. In a 2006 study, college students were asked to either sleep, meditate or watch TV for the same period of time. They were then tested on their alertness by being asked to hit a button every time a light flashed on a screen. The meditators did better than the nappers and TV watchers -- by a statistically significant percentage.

Nagendra RP, Maruthai N, Kutty BM. Meditation and Its Regulatory Role on Sleep. *Frontiers in Neurology*. 2012;3:54.  
doi:10.3389/fneur.2012.00054.

*In summary: by building your mindfulness muscle, you are training your prefrontal cortex which houses your rational reasoning centers. This enables you to be less impulsive and feel more in control of your life. The more we can evolve our thoughts & behaviors AWAY from the amygdala or "Lizard Brain", the better decisions we're able to make, and the less threat response (and stress) we'll feel. -kc*

