

# Meditation as a potential therapy for autism: a review.

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Autism is a chronic neurodevelopmental disorder of unknown cause that affects approximately 1-3 percent of children and four times more boys than girls. Its prevalence is global and its social impact is devastating. In autism, the brain is unable to process sensory information normally. Instead, simple stimuli from the outside world are experienced as overwhelmingly intense and strain the emotional centers of the brain. A stress response to the incoming information is initiated that destabilizes cognitive networks and short-circuits adequate behavioral output. As a result, the child is unable to respond adequately to stimulation and initiate social behavior towards family, friends, and peers. In addition, these children typically face immune-digestive disorders that heighten social fears, anxieties, and internal conflicts. While it is critical to treat the physical symptoms, it is equally vital to offer an evidence-based holistic solution that harmonizes both their emotional and physical well-being as they move from childhood into adult life. Here, we summarize evidence from clinical studies and neuroscience research that suggests that an approach built on yogic principles and meditative tools is worth pursuing. Desired outcomes include relief of clinical symptoms of the disease, greater relaxation, and facilitated expression of feelings and skills, as well as improved family and social quality of life.

Autism Res Treat. 2012;2012:835847. Epub 2012 Jun 4. Sequeira S, Ahmed M. Office of Clinical Research, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, 1275 York Avenue, New York, NY 10065, USA.

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