

# "Mind the trap": mindfulness practice reduces cognitive rigidity.

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Two experiments examined the relation between mindfulness practice and cognitive rigidity by using a variation of the Einstellung water jar task. Participants were required to use three hypothetical jars to obtain a specific amount of water. Initial problems were solvable by the same complex formula, but in later problems ("critical" or "trap" problems) solving was possible by an additional much simpler formula. A rigidity score was compiled through perseverance of the complex formula. In Experiment 1, experienced mindfulness meditators received significantly lower rigidity scores than non-meditators who had registered for their first meditation retreat. Similar results were obtained in randomized controlled Experiment 2 comparing non-meditators who underwent an eight meeting mindfulness program with a waiting list group. The authors conclude that mindfulness meditation reduces cognitive rigidity via the tendency to be "blinded" by experience. Results are discussed in light of the benefits of mindfulness practice regarding a reduced tendency to overlook novel and adaptive ways of responding due to past experience, both in and out of the clinical setting.

PLoS One. 2012;7(5):e36206. Epub 2012 May 15. Greenberg J, Reiner K, Meiran N. Department of Psychology, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva, Israel.

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