

The Psychological Effects of Meditation: A Meta-Analysis.

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In this meta-analysis, we give a comprehensive overview of the effects of meditation on psychological variables that can be extracted from empirical studies, concentrating on the effects of meditation on nonclinical groups of adult meditators. Mostly because of methodological problems, almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of an initially identified 595 studies had to be excluded. Most studies appear to have been conducted without sufficient theoretical background. To put the results into perspective, we briefly summarize the major theoretical approaches from both East and West. The 163 studies that allowed the calculation of effect sizes exhibited medium average effects ($r = .28$ for all studies and $r = .27$ for the $n = 125$ studies from reviewed journals), which cannot be explained by mere relaxation or cognitive restructuring effects. In general, results were strongest (medium to large) for changes in emotionality and relationship issues, less strong (about medium) for measures of attention, and weakest (small to medium) for more cognitive measures. However, specific findings varied across different approaches to meditation (transcendental meditation, mindfulness meditation, and other meditation techniques). Surprisingly, meditation experience only partially covaried with long-term impact on the variables examined. In general, the dependent variables used cover only some of the content areas about which predictions can be made from already existing theories about meditation; still, such predictions lack precision at present. We conclude that to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of why and how meditation works, emphasis should be placed on the development of more precise theories and measurement devices.

Psychol Bull. 2012 May 14. Sedlmeier P, Eberth J, Schwarz M, Zimmermann D, Haarig F, Jaeger S, Kunze S.

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