

## What Can Meditation do For YOU?



Meditation has been around for centuries, but not every practice involves the same techniques. There are different meditation formats based on your personality characteristics.

The best “way” to meditate for you will be explored in tomorrow’s assignment.

For today, understand that all meditations have one common goal: to bring a sense of calmness through softening your senses, relaxing your body and stilling your mind.

Meditation can be useful for those seeking focus and relaxation, but it also has some other surprising health benefits — most of which come from its amazing ability to reduce stress. Whether you're hoping to get your inflammation under control or wanting a better nights sleep, meditation can help you on your journey to optimal health.

Especially exciting is that it can change your body on a cellular level, as reported by [Forbes](#).

What happens to your body when you meditate every day?

## **You Can Reduce Your Overall Anxiety**

Stress is a part of life and we are currently living through an incredible time of change so no matter who you are, life can cause you anxiety. The good news: a daily meditation practice can help release your fears and internal struggles.

An article published in the [Journal of Behavioral Medicine](#) examined the relationship between "home practice of mindfulness" and "perceived stress," and found that those who spent time actively pursuing well-being via centering meditative exercises had improved psychological and physiological functioning and reduced anxiety symptoms.

A study cited in [Harvard Health Publishing](#), has shown that the brain can actually change in response to meditation. The brain's mPFC or "me center" and the amygdala or "fear center" usually work together to cause depression. But meditation has been shown to break this connection.

"When you meditate, you are better able to ignore the negative sensations of stress and anxiety, which explains, in part, why stress levels fall when you meditate," John W. Denninger of the Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine told the publication.

## **You Can Improve Your Focus**

Meditation may sound like a soothing activity, but it can actually be hard work. Finding your zen zone might be less chill and more boring than you may think. In fact, University of California–Davis researcher Katherine MacLean admitted to the [Association for Psychological](#)

[Science \(APS\)](#) that many people take for granted how "challenging it is to just sit and observe something without being distracted."

As part of a study, MacLean and her colleagues set out to answer if Buddhist meditation could enhance an individual's capacity for focus and attention. They observed 60 people — 30 of whom were sent on a meditative retreat for three months. Throughout the duration of the meditative study published in [Psychological Science](#), participants were given computer tests three separate times to "measure how well they could make fine visual distractions and sustain visual attention." They had to stare at a screen and press a button each time a subtle change appeared. It wasn't stimulating work. However, the participants' ability to distinguish the short lines improved over time along with their potential to focus. The research noted that even five months after the study, those who meditated every day reported improved attention spans.

## **You Can Enhance Your Memory**

According to a [2015 study from NIH](#), Kirtan Kriya, a type of meditation that takes about 15 minutes and has been practiced by generations of people for thousands of years, was shown to enhance memory in people suffering from cognitive issues and those at a greater risk for developing Alzheimer's disease.

[Psychology Today](#) noted that Kirtan Kriya helps to enhance "cerebral blood flow," which enables people to think more clearly while simultaneously improving "blood flow to the posterior cingulate gyrus," the area of the brain responsible for memory retrieval. Furthermore, it can improve "activity in the frontal lobe," which helps with attention and focus.

## **You Can Reduce Your Blood Pressure**

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), millions of people in the United States have high blood pressure or hypertension "and many do not have it under control." While specific treatment measures may need to be pursued, taking up a meditation practice can be a great way to naturally help lower those numbers.

An NIH Study published in *Hormone Molecular Biology and Clinical Investigation* demonstrated that meditation has a hormonal effect that, ultimately, reaches the central nervous system and aids the whole body. Researchers determined that meditation of all kinds helps to lower blood pressure, improve insulin resistance, and enhance all sorts of cellular activity — particularly those associated with the heart.

Another study examined the effects of transcendental meditation in particular. In this type of meditation, the participant strives to attain "perfect stillness, rest, stability, order, and a complete absence of mental boundaries," according to [WebMD](#). The results showed that this variation was more effective at lowering the systolic blood pressure of older patients — especially those who already had blood pressure that was above normal.

## **You Can Improve Your Sleep**

Insomnia is one of the most common sleep complaints causing doctors and researchers to be on the lookout for new sleep therapies. Fortunately, meditation has been shown to be incredibly effective for many people suffering from restless sleep.

[Studies from NIH](#) have repeatedly demonstrated that mindfulness-based stress reduction and mindfulness-based therapy for insomnia can both help people fall asleep faster and stay asleep longer.

## **You Can Naturally Control Your Pain**

Chronic pain is a common problem in the United States, affecting approximately 50 million adults, per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Several studies have identified a connection between meditation and pain. One Journal of Neuroscience study, for instance, showed that after four 20-minute meditation sessions over the course of four days, a group of volunteers rated the same burning pain as 57 percent less unpleasant and 40 percent less intense, [Health.com reported](#).

Those who practice meditation develop the ability to exert greater control over unpleasant feelings, including pain, by turning them down as if using a "volume knob" in the brain.

## **Boost Your Immune System**

[One small 2003 study](#) showed a link between an eight-week mindfulness meditation program and better immune function, and [2012 UCLA Research](#) suggested meditation could improve the immune system in older people.

## **Ready to Meditate Now?**

Reducing your anxiety, increasing your focus, reducing your high blood pressure, boosting your immune system, controlling your pain, improving your sleep and enhancing your memory, what are you waiting for??

Let's see what type of meditation is best for you so you can begin meditating to reap all its rewards.