



# Meditation and Mindfulness for Health and Wellbeing

## MENTAL EFFECTS OF MEDITATION





“ Concentration and Mindfulness go hand in hand in the job of meditation. Their co-operation results in insight and understanding.”

Bhante Gunaratana



WEAPONS OF



MASS DISTRACTION



*The ability to concentrate leads to*

Mental Clarity

Relaxation

Insight

Allowing

Letting go





## *Letting go and non avoidance*

Letting go comes from the mindfulness of paying attention to phenomena

We realise that it is unpleasant on all levels to hold on tight to things

As we let go and relax, we stop avoiding

We have the courage to see things as they really are and not how we want them to be

Out of this process comes deep healing, mental strength and insight





## *Our expansion of awareness*

Becoming less preoccupied with our own drama, we are able to see what is right in front of us

Regular meditators display increased empathy and at the same detachment

*Awareness allows us to connect with others without being too affected by the response received*





*“Attention-performance  
improvements that come with  
practice may paradoxically  
allow us to be more relaxed”*

*Jha & Baime (University of Pennsylvania Stress Management Program), 2007, Cognitive, Affective, & Behavioral Neuroscience*

- subjects were split into two categories
  - those new to mindfulness took part in an 8-week course with up to 30 mins of daily meditation.
  - more experienced attended an intensive one-month retreat.
- even for beginners, meditation enhanced performance and the ability to focus attention... in a matter of weeks.
- At the outset, experienced meditators demonstrated better executive functioning skills, the cognitive ability to voluntarily focus, manage tasks and prioritize goals.
- Conclusion: meditation, even as little as 30 minutes daily, may improve attention and focus





## *Zeidan et al., 2010, Consciousness and Cognition*

- participants who meditated for 20 minutes a day for four days showed an evident improvement in their critical cognition skills
- comparable to results that have been documented after far more extensive training - "shows the mind is easily changeable and highly influenced, especially by meditation."
- 63 student volunteers divided into two groups, one with meditation training while the other listened to a book (J.R.R. Tolkein's *The Hobbit*) being read aloud for equivalent periods of time.
- Before and after meditation/reading sessions participants given battery of behavioral tests assessing mood, memory, visual attention, attention processing, and vigilance.
- Both groups improved at the end of the experiment in measures of mood, but only the meditation group scored as much as 10 times better in cognitive measures.







“In the adult centres, the nerve paths are something fixed, ended and immutable.”

“It is for the science of the future to change, if possible, this harsh decree. Inspired with high ideals, it must work to impede or moderate the gradual decay of the neurons, to overcome the almost inevitable rigidity of their connections.”

- *Santiago Ramon y Calal (great Spanish neuroanatomist and Nobel prizewinner), 1913*





## *Neuroplasticity*

The brain undergoes continuous change throughout life in response to our experiences and thoughts

We can learn how to guide the process of change to optimise our life experience





*Your life is the  
creation of your mind*

Buddha





## *Koan*

What is the sound of one hand clapping?

What is your original face before your parents were born?

