

Reducing stress through meditation

[Health & Medicine](#), [Stress](#)



In today's world every one experience stresses almost every day and human body involuntarily reacts in ways that prepare them to fight or run. However, stress is something that needs special attention and if it is not taken care properly it may lead physical damage to every part of the body. There are several studies that suggest the beneficial affects of meditation is exactly the opposite ways that stress does. Therefore, they claim that “ meditation can restore the body to a serene state, serving the body to repair on its own, and averting further harm due to the physical effects of stress” (Scott n. pag). This paper is a literature review on what the experts think of the impact of meditation on stress management.

It is a well known fact that stress and tension has become the common thing in the world today. There are enormous pressures of work, finances, family life, disease, studies, parents, children, etc. “ In fact it is proven beyond doubt that stress and anxiety are the main cause for many serious health problems, such as heart disease, diabetes and strokes and many more problems” (Monslow n. pag).

Meditation is an age old technique that includes relaxing methods such as “ listening to the breath, repeating a mantra, or detaching from the thought process, to focus the attention and bring about a state of self awareness and inner calm” (Canter 176-177). Though many researchers have worked on this issue it has been difficult to prove its therapeutic value. However it is assumed that this stress releasing activity may have prophylactic and therapeutic health benefits. This has been proven because of certain physiological effects such as a decreased or slowed heart rate or a particular

electroencephalographic pattern that occur during meditation and describe a calm state may provide insight into how meditation works.

According to a study conducted by Eisenberg et al. (1964-1972) “ an association was found in a meta-analysis of cognitive behavioral techniques such as meditation for hypertension”. In another study of “ meta-analysis trials of relaxation and meditation for trait anxiety that included 70 trials of meditation and showed that the 35 trials of transcendental meditation were linked with significantly larger effect sizes than other techniques” (Eppley et al. 1957-1974).

According to another study in asthma problem it was found that sahaja meditation which is a technique of passive witnessing of thoughts, improved some outcomes. However, differences were not maintained at two months (Manocha et al. 110-115). Similarly, studies showed that people with epilepsy practising sahaja meditation had a significant decrease in objective stress measures and frequency of seizures (Panjwani et al 111-116; Panjwani et al 165-172).

A study that was designed to determine the effectiveness of a group stress reduction program based on mindfulness meditation for patients with anxiety disorders. In this study 22 study participants were selected with a structured clinical interview and found to meet the DSM- III-R criteria for generalized anxiety disorder or panic disorder with or without agoraphobia. During the study assessments, including self-ratings and therapists' ratings, were obtained weekly before and during the meditation-based stress reduction and relaxation program and monthly during the 3-month follow-up period.

It was found that a “ group mindfulness meditation training program can successfully decrease symptoms of anxiety and panic and can aid preserve these reductions in patients with generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, or panic disorder with agoraphobia” (Kabat-Zinn 936-943). The findings of a study by Kaplan et al (284-289) suggested that a meditation-based stress reduction program is effective for patients with fibromyalgia. In fact this is a chronic illness characterized by extensive pain, tenderness to light touch, fatigue, sleep disturbance, and resistance to treatment.

In yet another study by Barnes et al. (366–369) that was taken up to determine the impact of stress reduction on blood pressure in adolescents by the Transcendental Meditation program it was found that there was a greater decreases in daytime systolic blood pressure ($P < .04$) and diastolic blood pressure ($P < .06$) in those people who were practicing transcendental meditation when compared with the control group. Therefore the study concluded that there is a beneficial impact of the transcendental meditation program in youth who are at risk for the development of hypertension.

A study carried out atHarvardUniversity found that elderly individuals who learned Transcendental Meditation exhibited considerably superior improvements in a range of age-related aspects of mental and physical health when compared to other techniques or among the control group with no-treatment. This study demonstrated that majority of subjects involved in Transcendental Meditation rated this technique as individually helpful and uncomplicated to do when compared to the other techniques. A follow-up study after three years found that all those who had learned Transcendental Meditation were still alive compared with significantly lower survival rates for

the other groups and for the remaining population of the institutions where the study was carried out (Alexander et al. 950-964).

Work Cited

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