

# Benefits of Meditation Backed by Science



[Source](#)

Mindful meditation has become popular in the past few years. The internet is rife with articles on how meditation is a cure-all answer for mental, emotional, and physical issues. From dealing with depression to becoming highly resilient, mindfulness and [meditation tools](#) by Lots of Zen seem to provide miraculous benefits. However, is there any scientific proof to back these claims?

Since the early 2000s, scientists have been studying the effect of mindfulness and meditation. While their early findings were encouraging, hyperbole undermines the potential benefits of meditation. And as journalists overstated the benefits of meditation, people became more skeptical about the claims. It further aggravates matters that the scientific studies behind mindful meditation suffered from poor research

designs and small sample sizes. To make matters worse, scientists and practitioners cannot even agree on the definition of meditation. However, there are several areas in which well-designed studies do support mindfulness.

Therefore, we will discuss nine benefits of meditation supported by scientifically rigorous evidence.

- 1. Long-term meditation makes you resilient to stress:** It may seem like everyone you meet has anxiety. Even though everyone has different stress triggers, most people report their workplace as the source of stress in their lives. However, research suggests that stress is not inherently harmful. Instead, we must focus on how the individual reacts to specific triggers. It explains why highly qualified healthcare professionals such as doctors or nurses with a [master of science in nursing online](#) advise learning about coping mechanisms. These professionals have in-depth knowledge of mental issues and can help identify which coping mechanism is better for individuals. For instance, people with high tolerance levels respond to challenging situations by engaging in problem-solving, which is an effective coping mechanism. However, many with low tolerance opt for meditation. An IFM study concluded that long-term meditation reduces the inflammatory response to a psychological stressor. It also dampens the activity of the amygdala.
- 2. Meditation sharpens your attention:** Mindful meditation is akin to weight lifting for your attention span. One study at Columbia University found that meditation counters our natural tendency to stop paying attention to new information. Another study found it can reduce mind-wandering and make us more responsive to incoming stimuli. Researchers are working on finding out if meditation can help people with attention deficit disorders to retain attention.

3. **Meditation improves mental health:** Early research suggested that meditation had a significant impact on our mental health. However, the latest research shows that these claims might be misleading. A [2014 study](#) published in JAMA International Medicine examined the effect of mindfulness meditation in 3,515 participants. Patients reported a slight reduction in anxiety and depression through meditation. A holistic medical treatment plan with meditation can improve patient outcomes.
4. **Meditation improves your private life:** Several studies find a link between mindfulness and better relationships. In a 2016 study, researchers analyzed mindfulness in couples. Then they compared the cortisol levels of each pair before and after they discussed a conflict. Interestingly cortisol levels in people who practiced mindfulness returned to normal more quickly. Studies also show that mindfulness can reduce stress and anxiety in parents of pre-schoolers. Another pilot study illustrated that mindful parenting increases positive behavior in children.
5. **Meditation reduces bias:** Recent studies show that practicing mindfulness can make you less biased. A [2014 study](#) found that brief meditation intervention reduced bias towards homeless people. Another experiment showed that participants were less biased towards people of color after receiving mindfulness training.
6. **Meditation reduces the effects of aging:** Research suggests that unmanaged stress is the primary cause of aging. And as meditation mitigates the detrimental effects of stress, it also effectively fights premature aging. According to a study published in Translational Psychiatry, 102 women spent six days in a meditation program. Researchers compared the bio makers in the blood drawn before and after the retreat. They found evidence to suggest that the biomarkers for aging were improving. Another study found that people with age-

related memory loss perform better in neuropsychological tests after meditation intervention.

7. **Meditation improves sleep:** Millions of people struggle with insomnia. Fortunately, scientific evidence suggests that meditation can improve the quality of sleep. It can also help people sleep for longer. One study of NCBI found that people who volunteered for meditation programs slept for longer. Another study found that meditation increases the release of sleep hormones.
8. **Meditation helps control pain:** While research on the relationship between meditation and pain is not conclusive, some studies suggest it helps patients manage pain. It also improves the quality of life of patients suffering from chronic pain. According to a survey of the Journal of Neuroscience, people who practice meditation reported a 57 percent reduction in pain intensity. It is necessary to note that meditation does not change physical pain. It only changes how we respond to pain.
9. **Meditation decreases blood pressure:** High blood pressure contributes to atherosclerosis. It also makes a person vulnerable to heart failure and pulmonary disease. Fortunately, meditation can help us manage our blood pressure. An NCBI study with 1000 participants found that meditation techniques helped reduce the blood pressure of older volunteers. Scientists believe that meditation controls blood pressure by relaxing our nerve signals and managing the fight or flight response.

## **Conclusion**

Meditation does induce a sense of peace and calm in most people. But it is not beneficial for everyone. People who have experienced trauma may sometimes react negatively to meditation. Researchers also found that many people may experience anxiety, panic, and numbness to light and sound stimuli during meditation. Furthermore, mindfulness and

meditation are umbrella terms that cover many different practices. Each type of meditation has a unique benefit. So, if you want to tackle a specific issue, you should choose an approach that helps with your problem.