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MEDITATION PROVEN TO CHANGE BRAIN STRUCTURE

Nicholas Stettin
21st January 2016

Meditate and you can decrease anxiety, get happier and quite literally, restructure your brain.

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It's a big claim but that's exactly the research to come out of a [study](#) done by a Harvard University-affiliated team from Massachusetts General Hospital. The results surprised even the doctors conducted the research.

"Although the practice of meditation is associated with a sense of peacefulness and physical relaxation, practitioners have long claimed that meditation also provides cognitive and psychological benefits that persist throughout the day," says study senior author Sara Lazar of the MGH Psychiatric Neuroimaging Research Program and a Harvard Medical School instructor in psychology. "This study demonstrates that changes in brain structure may underlie some of these reported improvements and that people are not just feeling better because they are spending time relaxing."

Participants in the survey spent an average of 27 minutes a day for eight weeks meditating, and this caused an increase in grey matter density in the hippocampus – the area of the brain associated with self awareness, compassion and introspection.

"Participant-reported reductions in stress also were correlated with decreased gray-matter density in the amygdala, which is known to play an important role in anxiety and stress. None of these changes were seen in the control group, indicating that

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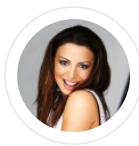
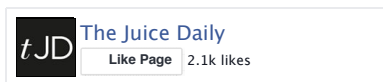
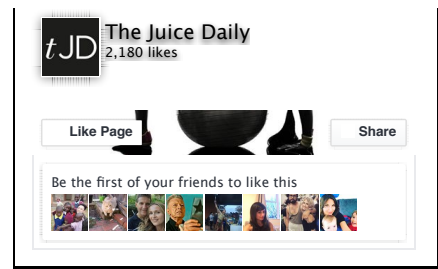
they had not resulted merely from the passage of time, “ said MGH researcher Sue McGreevey.

“It is fascinating to see the brain’s plasticity and that, by practicing meditation, we can play an active role in changing the brain and can increase our well-being and quality of life,” says Britta Hölzel, first author of the paper and a research fellow at MGH and Giessen University in Germany.

In Australia, meditation is growing in popularity, with the opening of [Centred Meditation](#) in Sydney’s CBD which offers guided meditation classes throughout the day, [Happy Melon](#) in Melbourne which has added meditation to its timetable of yoga classes, and The Broad Place in Sydney, which offers intensive vedic meditation courses.

“My students that learn vedic meditation always report increased feelings of compassion, clarity and creativity, and a deep connection to themselves,” says Jacqui Lewis, principal of [The Broad Place](#). “A lot of the time, sensations of feeling anxious is associated with stress and a general disconnection with the world and ourselves, and when we do the opposition of that, and increase the connectivity, then we feel much calmer and more grounded.”

- Visit [Centred Meditation](#) and [Happy Melon](#) for free on Bodypass



The awesome person who wrote this...

[Nedahl Stelio](#)

Nedahl Stelio is the editor of The Juice Daily, and a self-confessed health nut. A mother of two, Nedahl has been a journalist for over 18 years, is a former magazine editor and author of Mojo Mama Secrets. She believes barre is the new pilates, coconuts will never go out of fashion and that everyone should eat eggs for breakfast.

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