

Meditation promotes adaptability

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A collective meditation in Sri Lanka. Image: Wikipedia.

Certain meditation techniques can promote behavior to vary adaptively from moment to moment depending on current goals, rather than remaining rigid and inflexible. This is the outcome of a study by Lorenza Colzato and Iliana Samara from the Leiden Institute of Brain and Cognition at Leiden University, published in *Consciousness and Cognition*.

Different meditation types, different effects

Colzato and her fellow researchers were the first to investigate if meditation has an immediate effect on behavior, even in people who have never meditated before. "There are two fundamental types of meditation that affect us differently," Colzato says, "open

monitor meditation (which involves being receptive to every thought and sensation) and focused attention meditation (which entails focusing on a particular thought or object)."

Study design

36 people who had never meditated before participated in this experiment. Half of the people practiced open monitor meditation while the other half practiced focused attention meditation for 20 minutes, respectively. After meditating, Samara asked participants to perform a task during which they were required to continuously adjust and adaptively discriminate irrelevant information from relevant information as quickly as possible.

Meditation optimizes adaptive behavior

Compared to participants who performed OMM, people who performed FAM were significantly better in adapting and adjusting their behavior from moment to moment. Colzato: "Even if preliminary, these results provide the first evidence that meditation instantly affects [behavior](#) and that this impact does not require practice. As such, our findings shed an interesting new light on the potential of [meditation](#) for optimizing [adaptive behavior](#)."

More information: "Meditation-induced cognitive-control states regulate response-conflict adaptation: Evidence from trial-to-trial adjustments in the Simon task." *Consciousness and Cognition* 35, 110-114. [dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.concog.2015.04.012](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.concog.2015.04.012)

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