

Featured Research

Meditation makes you more creative

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Summary: Certain meditation techniques can promote creative thinking. This is the outcome of a study by cognitive psychologists.

Certain meditation techniques can promote creative thinking. This is the outcome of a study by cognitive psychologist Lorenza Colzato and her fellow researchers at Leiden University, published 19 April in *Frontiers in Cognition*.

This study is a clear indication that the advantages of particular types of meditation extend much further than simply relaxation. The findings support the belief that meditation can have a long-lasting influence on human cognition, including how we think and how we experience events.

Two ingredients of creativity

The study investigates the influences of different types of meditative techniques on the two main ingredients of creativity: divergent and convergent styles of thinking.

- **Divergent thinking** Divergent thinking allows many new ideas to be generated. It is measured using the so-called Alternate Uses Task method where participants are required to think up as many uses as possible for a particular object, such as a pen.
- **Convergent thinking** Convergent thinking, on the other hand, is a process whereby one possible solution for a particular problem is generated. This method is measured using the Remote Associates Task method, where three unrelated words are presented to the participants, words such as 'time', 'hair' and 'stretch'. The participants are then asked to identify the common link: in this case, 'long'.

Analysis of meditation techniques

Colzato used creativity tasks that measure convergent and divergent thinking to assess which meditation techniques most influence creative activities. The meditation techniques analysed are Open Monitoring and Focused Attention meditation.

- In Open Monitoring meditation the individual is receptive to all the thoughts and sensations experienced without focusing attention on any particular concept or object.
- In Focused Attention meditation the individual focuses on a particular thought or object.

Different types of meditation have different effects

These findings demonstrate that not all forms of meditation have the same effect on creativity. After an Open Monitoring meditation the participants performed better in divergent thinking, and generated more new ideas than previously, but Focused Attention (FA) meditation produced a different result. FA meditation also had no significant effect on convergent thinking leading to resolving a problem.

Story Source:

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Journal Reference:

1. Lorenza S. Colzato, Ayca Ozturk, Bernhard Hommel. **Meditate to Create: The Impact of Focused-Attention and Open-Monitoring Training on Convergent and Divergent Thinking.** *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2012; 3 DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2012.00116

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