**Meditation's Brain Boost**

**Yoga and meditation are becoming increasingly mainstream activities in the U.S., and new research helps explain why. Daily sessions of either practice can have dramatic effects on brain function. Scientists asked 31 healthy people to engage in 25 minutes of hatha yoga, mindfulness meditation, and quiet reading in random order. Mental tasks completed before and after each session found that yoga and meditation led to greater improvements in the participants' energy level, mood, executive function, and ability to control thoughts and emotions. "Hatha yoga and mindfulness meditation both focus on the brain's conscious processing power on a limited number of targets, like breathing and posing, and also reduce processing of nonessential information," the study's co-author, Peter Hall, tells ScienceDaily.com. That mental training, he said, apparently enables people "to focus more easily on what they choose to attend to in everyday life." *(The Week magazine, September 29, 2017)***

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**Meditation’s Genetic Impact**

**Plenty of research has proved that meditation and yoga can lower blood pressure, improve mood, counter stress, and benefit your mental and physical health. Now a new study has shown for the first time that these ancient centering practices can actually affect your genes, turning beneficial ones on and harmful ones off. Researchers analyzed the genes of 26 volunteers who were unfamiliar with meditation, and then taught them a 10 to 20 minute meditation routine that involved rhythmic breathing, chanting, and focusing the mind. After the volunteers meditated twice a day for eight weeks, researchers found that the practice had activated genes that make cells more efficient at metabolizing energy and that protect telomeres, the caps at the end of chromosomes that help protect DNA from damage caused by aging. The practice also appeared to deactivate genes related to chronic inflammation, a risk factor for many diseases, including heart disease and cancer. Meditation is “not New Age nonsense,” study author Herbert Benson of Massachusetts General Hospital tells New Scientist. “These effects are quite powerful in how they change your gene activity.” *(The Week magazine, May 24, 2013)***

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