A 10-Minute Meditation That Changes Your Brain

5 MIN READ

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New study shows short loving-kindness meditation can rewire memory circuits and your emotional regulation.

What if just ten minutes of meditation could help build the kind of brain resilience seen in people who age better than anyone else?

A new **study from Columbia University** suggests it can. Researchers used a unique patient population, epilepsy patients chronically implanted with responsive neurostimulation devices, which allowed them to use intracranial EEG (electrodes implanted deep in the brain) to measure the impact of a short loving-kindness meditation on key regions that support emotional regulation and memory, two of the cognitive superpowers shared by so-called super agers.

Even among beginners, just ten minutes of practice changed activity in the amygdala and hippocampus, regions that help regulate reactivity and preserve memory. These shifts occurred in beta and gamma wave activity, brain rhythms often linked to focus, learning, and mood regulation, and typically disrupted in people with anxiety or depression.

“The possibility of being able to willfully control these brain waves through meditation is pretty amazing,” said Dr. Ignacio Saez, the study’s senior author. While the study was small, this is groundbreaking because it shows, on a cellular level, that even a single **meditation** session can soothe emotional reactivity and enhance memory-supportive brain networks.

Rewire Your Brain for Focus and Compassion

Super agers are older adults, typically over 80, who show brain function on par with people decades younger. Many exhibit unusually strong memory, emotional resilience, and **cognitive flexibility**.

This new research offers a clue to how anyone might start building those traits earlier in life. If **e**ven a single meditation session can impact deep neural networks, a consistent practice may help cultivate the kind of neurological strength that keeps Super Agers sharp and emotionally agile.

Better yet, this approach is noninvasive, low-cost, and requires no special gear, just your breath and attention.

Try This Short Loving-Kindness Meditation

Loving-kindness practice can feel awkward at first. But the effects are built over time, so go easy on yourself at first and remember that kindness towards yourself helps you bring kindness to others. Here's a simple meditation adapted from renowned loving-kindness teacher Sharon Salzberg's ***A Compassion Practice for Opening the Heart***, a similar practice used in the study.

1. Sit Comfortably
Find a relaxed seated position. You can close your eyes or rest them gently with a soft downward gaze.

2. Imagine a Circle of Love
Picture yourself at the center of a circle made up of the most loving beings you can

imagine. They could be friends, family, mentors, historical figures, or even mythical beings, anyone who inspires love and care.

3. Imagine Yourself Receiving Their Care
Feel yourself as the recipient of their attention, energy, and goodwill. Silently repeat phrases of loving-kindness like:

- *May I be safe.*
- *May I be happy.*
- *May I be healthy.*
- *May I live with ease of heart.*

Thoughts and judgments may arise, and when they do, bring your attention back to the phrases. Feel into the sensations the words elicit in your body.

4. Let Emotions Arise Naturally
You might feel gratitude, awe, shyness, resistance, or even vulnerability. Let whatever arises flow through you, knowing you are surrounded by safety and loving care. Keep returning to the phrases.

5. Open Yourself to Receiving.
Imagine your skin as porous, soaking in this loving energy. Know that you don't have to do anything special to deserve it, you receive love simply because you exist.

6. Extend Love Outward
When you are ready, and if it's available to you, allow the love you're receiving to radiate back out to the circle. And then, if you can, to all beings everywhere.

Now offer those same phrases to others, first your circle, then your broader community, then all beings.

- *May all beings be safe.*

- *May all beings be happy.*
- *May all beings be healthy.*
- *May all beings live with ease of heart.*

7. Close With Intention
When you feel ready, open your eyes or lift your gaze. Carry that feeling of open-heartedness into your day.

Why Loving-Kindness Meditation Works

This type of meditation taps into emotional and memory centers of the brain that support well-being as we age. By shifting neural rhythms linked to stress and focus, it may help train the brain for greater longevity, emotional balance, and mental agility. It expands your capacity for kindness towards yourself and others, like exercising a new muscle. Developing your loving-kindness muscles can set the foundation for thriving in midlife and beyond.

Make it a ritual: Try 10 minutes of loving-kindness before bed or after waking to help reset your nervous system and increase emotional resilience over time.

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