

Meditation Benefits for Seniors

Have you ever heard someone talking about having a "senior moment"? This usually refers to someone being forgetful or acting in some other way that is linked to impaired mental functioning. The term came to be no doubt because human beings equate a weaker mind with old age.

Science backs up this belief. As we age, especially as human beings progress past the age of 50, research shows us that our mental functioning begins to decline. However, this is far from an unavoidable situation.

Seniors that meditate and practice mindfulness can experience dramatic and positive improvements in their mental abilities.

The following meditation benefits for seniors can help those over 50 reclaim much of their mental functioning, especially if senior moments are popping up more frequently.

- Meditation stimulates the "smile and be happy" area of the brain. Your prefrontal cortex is the "feel good" region of your brain. As you age, you naturally activate this region less frequently, which is why seniors often experience depression and higher levels of stress and anxiety than they did when they were younger. A meditation practice leads to less stress and depression, as well as a greater sense of happiness.
- Meditation improves mood and emotional control. A study out of Thailand supplemented a walking therapy with meditation for seniors. Those who meditated showed more positive moods regularly than those who did not. A reduction in depression and improvement in functional fitness was also noted.
- Regular meditation improves memory. Meditation stimulates the hippocampus, as well as the frontal brain lobe. This means better short and long-term memory recall for seniors. The ability to store and access newly made memories is also enhanced.
- Meditation improves senior relationships. Because of the stress-relieving, mood-improving nature of mindfulness and other meditation practices, seniors enjoy better relationships with their caregivers, family members and others in the senior community.

- A study out of UCLA shows that an 8 week meditation program "... significantly decreased rates of self-reported loneliness." Depression from a perceived state of loneliness is a significant concern for seniors, especially those over 70 and 80 years of age.

Meditation benefits for seniors and the elderly include a decreased sense of loneliness, greater longevity, better health, less mental fog, a reduction in health care costs and a slowing of the progression of Alzheimer's disease. Meditation sessions can last just 10 and 20 minutes, and several such sessions a week lead to a multitude of mental and physical advantages seniors would be wise to take advantage of.