

The Benefits of Meditation

The brain waves of meditators show why they're healthier. Neuroscientists have found that meditators shift their brain activity to different areas of the cortex—brain waves in the stress-prone right frontal cortex move to the calmer left frontal cortex. In other words, they were calmer and happier than before.

By [Colin Allen](#), published on April 01, 2003

Maybe [meditation](#) isn't so mysterious after all. Neuroscientists have found that meditators shift their [brain](#) activity to different areas of the cortex - brain waves in the stress-prone right frontal cortex move to the calmer left frontal cortex. This mental shift decreases the negative effects of [stress](#), mild depression and anxiety. There is also less activity in the amygdala, where the brain processes [fear](#).

Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D., of the University of Massachusetts Medical School, recorded the brain waves of stressed-out employees of a high-tech firm in Madison, Wisconsin. The subjects were split randomly into two groups, 25 people were asked to learn meditation over eight weeks, and the remaining 16 were left alone as a control group

All participants had their brain waves scanned three times during the study: at the beginning of the experiment, when meditation lessons were completed eight weeks later and four months after that. The researchers found that the meditators showed a pronounced shift in activity to the left frontal lobe. In other words, they were calmer and happier than before. The study will be published in the next issue of *Psychosomatic Medicine*.