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Mindful About Life

Science based techniques for a GREAT life!

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Meditators Have Young Brains

It may not surprise you that as we get older, our brains change. Certainly, it changes a lot when we are babies and while it slows down a bit, the brain is not fully formed until about age 25. (This is why teenagers often make some pretty stupid choices – their brains are not really formed yet. A good reason to, perhaps, put off driving an extra few years and certainly a good reason to have 21 as the legal age for drinking.)

Even after age 25 there are still a lot of changes going on in the brain and those changes keep happening until we die. After about age 50, the brain begins to shrink and this is, most probably, connected to some of the problems that older folks have with thinking straight.

Separately, the brains of people who meditate are different from the brains of people who do not meditate. Meditating actually changes your brain. For example, the cortex, or outer layer of the brain, is where a lot of our more complex functions

and thoughts come from. In 2005, Sara Lazar and other researchers showed that the cortex of 50-year old people who meditate is the same thickness as 20 or 30-year old people who do not meditate. Meditation can actually make us better thinkers, perhaps.

In 2010, a group of brain scientists headed by Katja Franke figured out a way of determining the age of a person by looking

at an MRI of their brain. One of the main reasons they did this was to see if people with Alzheimer's have much "older" brains than we would expect for their age. (They do.)

In 2015, Eileen Luders and her colleagues looked at the MRI's of 100 people, 50 who had been meditating for a long time – on average 20 years – and 50 people who did not meditate. When they looked at the MRI's of the two groups, the brains of meditators seemed to be 7 ½ years younger.

So, in addition to all the other benefits, meditation may help you preserve your youth by keeping your brain young.



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