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EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCES AND PERFORMANCE ON PSI TASKS DURING AND AFTER MEDITATION CLASSES AND RETREATS

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Background: Anecdotal reports and some research indicate that meditation increases mindfulness and paranormal experiences of precognition, telepathy, clairvoyance, and synchronicities. There is limited knowledge about the prevalence or impact of these experiences in people who meditate and the general population. We conducted a prospective trial to collect data about these experiences and abilities from individuals who either voluntarily enlisted in a meditation course or those who did not. We collected pre and post data and explored the impact of experiences.

Aims: Aims of the study were to assess frequency and impact of self-reported mindfulness, paranormal experiences and performance on psi tasks in two groups and over time.

Method: We collected data on mystical, transcendent, or transformative experiences during or related to meditation practice and anomalous physical phenomena related to meditation, extended human capacities and difficult states of meditation practice. We collected data from tasks administered online to evaluate psi abilities. We explored the impact of such experiences or abilities upon the individuals experiencing them. We collected data securely online with IRB approval and used mixed-ANOVA to compare groups across time, and independent samples t-tests to examine post-test data.

Results: 118 completed the study (meditation intervention = 78; control = 40). Overall, those who engaged in a meditation practice (and scored higher on the mindfulness variables) endorsed higher levels of paranormal experiences. The meditation group reported higher levels of paranormal experiences ($M = 1.48$, $SD = .18$) than the control group ($M = 1.81$, $SD = .15$), $p < .001$ and the meditation group reported higher levels of meaning attributed to those experiences ($M = 78.10$, $SD = 17.04$) than the control group ($M = 64.89$, $SD = 25.40$), $p = .002$ at the end of the study.

Conclusions: The nonrandomly selected meditation group demonstrated increased mindfulness scores over time and mindfulness levels were positively associated with higher levels of reported paranormal experiences both before and after the intervention, when compared to the control group. Performance on psi tasks did not improve in either group over time and these tasks may not be sensitive enough to detect significant changes.

Keywords: Meditation, Mindfulness, Parapsychology, Psi

Publications:

Penberthy, J. P., Hodge, A. S., Hook, J. N., Delorme, A., Pehlivanova, M., & Vieten, C. (2020). Meditators and nonmeditators: a descriptive analysis over time with a focus on unusual and extraordinary experiences. *J Yoga Physiother*, 8(3), 555744.

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