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September health and fitness newsletter

Hi everyone,

I hope everyone has had a good summer break and is looking forwards to some warm, unseasonal weather this coming week!

This month's newsletter focuses on how regular meditation can alter the structure of the brain and how walnuts may help with breast cancer reduction.

Meditation:

Such a simple practise that has so many benefits for our wellbeing

Meditation is not only an excellent way of managing and reducing stress but there is now scientific evidence that it changes the brain in ways that are very beneficial for our wellbeing.

In a study carried out by researchers at Massachusetts General Hospital into mindful meditation practise they concluded that an eight week study into meditation produced measurable changes in participants' brain regions associated with memory, sense of self, empathy and stress. This is the first piece of research that displays the changes in the brain's grey matter which are produced by mindful meditation.

These brain changes included thickening of the cerebral cortex in areas associated with the integration of emotions and attention.

"Although the practice of meditation is associated with a sense of peacefulness and physical relaxation, practitioners have long claimed that meditation also provides cognitive and psychological benefits that persist throughout the day," Sara Lazar, PhD, of the MGH Psychiatric Neuroimaging Research Program, the study's senior author, said in a media statement.



Walnuts may help to prevent breast cancer

Researchers from Marshall University in West Virginia report in the journal *Nutrition and Cancer* that small amounts of walnuts eaten daily can significantly lower the risk of breast cancer in women. Walnuts are a naturally great tasting source of healthy Omega-3 fats, minerals, vitamins and protein that have long been associated with good health. Interestingly, it is not only the potent dose of Omega-3 fats that are responsible for the risk reduction, but also a synergistic effect between multiple nutrients provided by the nut. Scientists now confirm that eating two ounces of this super food each day can significantly lower your risk of developing this insidious killer disease.

Source: Natural News

"This study demonstrates that changes in brain structure may underlie some of these reported improvements and that people are not just feeling better because they are spending time relaxing."

For this study, Magnetic Resonance (MR) images were taken of 16 people two weeks before and two weeks after they participated in the 8 week study. The study comprised of guided meditation practice, which focuses on non-judgmental awareness of sensations, feelings and state of mind. The meditators spent an average of approx. 30 mins per day doing the meditation exercises. Also MR scans were taken of a control group of non-meditators over a similar 8 week period.

At the end of the 8 week study period, the MR images displayed increased grey matter density in the hippocampus (this area of the brain is important for learning and memory) and in structures associated with self-awareness, compassion and introspection.

The meditators also participated in a detailed questionnaire after the study which reported significant improvements in their stress levels compared with the pre-study period. These reductions in stress were also correlated with decreased grey-matter density in the amygdala, an area of the brain which plays an important role in stress and anxiety.

"It is fascinating to see the brain's plasticity and that, by practicing meditation, we can play an active role in changing the brain and can increase our well-being and quality of life," Britta Holzel, PhD, first author of the paper and a research fellow at MGH and Giessen University in Germany, said in the press statement. "Other studies in different patient populations have shown that meditation can make significant improvements in a variety of symptoms, and we are now investigating the underlying mechanisms in the brain that facilitate this change."
Source: Natural news

Mindfulness meditation is an effective way to reduce stress, depression and anxiety as well as improving our overall wellbeing. For further information about mindfulness and meditation coaching please check out my new website, coming soon or contact me directly for more information.



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New Website Coming Soon

In October I am planning to launch my look website, so watch this space and make sure you check into:

www.aspirations-coaching.com

For information on coaching for fitness and the mind.

Have a good week,

John

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