

Meditation and Telomere Length

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Telomeres are DNA and protein complexes that are located at the end of linear chromosomes and are necessary for chromosome stability. In general, telomeres shorten with human age and serve as predictor of the onset of diseases, including hypertension, atherosclerosis, type 2 diabetes mellitus, cancer mortality, cardiovascular disease, and cognitive decline and dementia.

Recent research published online: 22 February 2016 suggests that the practice of meditation is associated with longer leukocyte telomere length. Studies of telomere lengths of a group of Zen meditation experts and healthy matched comparison participants showed the mediators group had a longer median telomere length and a lower percentage of short telomeres in individual cells than those in the comparison group. These results suggest that the absence of experiential avoidance of negative emotions and thoughts is integral to the connection between meditation and telomeres.

Alda M, Puebla-Guedea M, Rogero B, et al. Zen meditation, Length of Telomeres, and the Role of Experiential Avoidance and Compassion. *Mindfulness* DOI 10.1007/s12671-016-0500-5.)