Is Stress the New Drug? An Analysis on Meditation's Effects on the Addicted Brain, Stress Perception, and Prefrontal Cognitive Function

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Stress in our society is a problem that affects almost everyone. This investigation sought to discover whether high perceived stress levels and the subsequent decrease in prefrontal functionality could be controlled with meditation. Fifty participants were chosen randomly from ages of fourteen to sixteen. Participants were first given a test that would measure their perceived stress levels. They were then given the Yale Food Addiction Scale that would measure their proneness to addiction. Afterwards they were given a five minute concentration test to measure their cognitive function. These results were to be used as a baseline for how the stress they perceived in their lives was affecting their brains. These individuals then underwent a meditation regime where they meditated for ten minutes everyday for three weeks. At the end of the three weeks, they were then tested again for stress, addiction, and concentration levels. Daily meditation helped to lower stress levels, proneness to addiction, and increased concentration levels as it improved prefrontal functionality. After, a study was then conducted evaluating the effects of meditation on individuals with schizophrenia, as they have very similar brain chemistry to those with high stress. It was found that meditation helped to lower schizophrenic individuals stress levels, proneness to addiction, and improve prefrontal functionality.

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