

# Experienced “Mindfulness” meditators have superior mind-body awareness

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## **Meditation Beats Dance for Harmonization**

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It is generally thought that performers such as ballet and modern dancers are more in sync with their bodies. However, a study conducted by the University of California, Berkeley, revealed that people who meditate are even more in emotional sync with their bodies than such dancers.



The study evaluated the extent that professional dancers and experienced meditators were able to emotionally track physiological changes in heart and breathing rates.

Very interestingly it was discovered that despite dancers spending a huge amount of time and effort in dedication to developing precise control and awareness of their body's muscles and movement, they had no more mind-body connection than the average person.

Experienced meditators of the 'mindfulness meditation' technique or Vipassana had the closest mind-body awareness. This technique requires the practitioner to concentrate on their heartbeat, breathing, feelings and thoughts, but without leveling any judgement.

UC Berkeley psychology professor, Robert Levenson who is the study's senior author said, "We all talk about our emotions as if they are intimately connected to our bodies - such as the 'heartache of sadness' and 'bursting a blood vessel' in anger," and therefore "We sought to precisely measure how close that connection was, and found it was stronger for meditators."

The researchers said that mindfulness meditation is already being used as a treatment for psychological and physical problems, saying: "We believe that some of these health benefits derive from meditation's capacity to increase the association between mind and body in emotion."

To carry out the study, 21 dancers were recruited from dance centres in the San Francisco Bay Area, plus 21 experienced Vipassana meditators plus a further 21 reasonably active people that had no experience in meditation, dance, professional sports or Pilates, who acted as the control group. All volunteers were aged between 18 and 40

Each volunteer was wired to electrodes that measured their bodily responses to film clips with emotionally charged scenes. Each participant had to rate how they were feeling. All volunteers rated the similar emotional responses to the scenes, but the meditators revealed " correlations between the emotions they reported feeling and the speed of their heartbeats."

The dancers and the control group had almost the same results.