

UC Davis, California and Northeastern University both issued press releases this week announcing soon to be published research that connects meditation with health and well-being.

The UC Davis study from the Shamatha Project suggests that focusing on the present moment - specifically sensory experience and the task at hand - lowers resting levels of the stress hormone cortisol. Tonya Jacobs, postdoctoral researcher at the UC Davis Center for Mind and Brain explains: "This is the first study to show a direct relation between resting cortisol and scores on any type of mindfulness scale."

In a small study from Northeastern University, those with eight weeks of meditation training were five times more likely to help a stranger than those with no meditation training. The meditation research group was subdivided into two smaller groups: one group had an educational component that taught compassion in addition to meditation training and the second group had only meditation training. This allowed researchers to tease out whether talking about compassion led to participants more helpful behavior or whether meditation led to participants more helpful behavior. Here's what they found:

"The study found that about 15 percent of the nonmeditators—the waitlisted group—got up and offered their seat to the sufferer compared to about 50 percent of those in both meditation groups—those who engaged in discussions about compassion and those who only participated in meditation training. The results suggest that it was the meditation itself—not the discussions—that accounted for the increase."

To learn more about these studies check out the full press releases by [clicking here for the study from UC Davis on resting cortisol](#) from the Shamatha Project and [here for the study from Northeastern University on compassion](#).