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**Exploring the Impact of Meditation on Stress and Psychopathology:  
Attentional Allocation as a Potential Mechanism of Active Change  
Following Meditation**

Meditation improves psychological functioning and overall well-being, but no one seems to know how. It might help people improve the way that they use their attention and deal with stress. Those who have meditated over 30 years can focus their attention in ways that those who have never meditated can't. For example, meditators can identify the content of rapidly-presented images better than non-meditators. This improved attentional ability may help meditators spend less time attending to unpleasant images or experiences and more time attending to their pleasant counterparts. In addition, when meditators do experience unpleasant sensations, they may learn to allow them to pass without spending excessive amounts of time dwelling on them. Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), an 8-week program of training in meditation, improves depression, anxiety, and stress.

In this study, community individuals experiencing mild to moderate levels of depression and anxiety will undergo MBSR training and complete laboratory tasks related to attentional function, emotional experiences, and the way they relate to their experiences. We hypothesize that the meditation training will improve anxiety, depression, and mood via its impact on their attention.