



Quantifiable Constituents of Spiritual Growth

This project is an extension of the Shamatha Project, the most comprehensive scientific study of intensive meditation conducted to date.

In 2007, the Shamatha Project research group assessed experiential, psychological, cognitive, emotional, neurophysiological, and hormonal changes during and after two, 3-month, full-time meditation retreats. This study involves collecting new data six years after the original retreats to examine long-term effects of intensive training. We will analyse these new data in concert with our existing multi-method dataset to examine longitudinal patterns of change from the initial retreat period to 5 months, 15 months, and 6 years.

We are conducting semi-structured interviews to investigate participants' own accounts of their long-term spiritual growth 6 years after the intensive training. We are also interviewing participants' close family, friends and acquaintances to investigate how participants' spiritual development affected individuals in their social environment, and how self-reported spiritual growth compares to other-reported changes.

We have administered a battery of questionnaires containing previously validated measures of various adaptive and maladaptive constructs. Participants' close-others also completed these questionnaires, again to compare self-reports with others' reports.

We are using state-of-the-art statistical techniques and network analytic approaches to analyse the complex dynamics of, and associations between, the psychological, physiological, and experiential components of our longitudinal dataset. The project will deepen our understanding, from a multidisciplinary perspective, of how intra- and inter-personal dynamics of meditation training affect the quality of life for self and others.

The results will interest a wide audience, including mindfulness-based therapists improving the efficacy of their interventions, parents raising children with physical or mental disabilities, and educators promoting focused attention and prosocial behaviour in schools.



Project Title: Quantifiable Constituents of Spiritual Growth

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