

## “Mindfulness” Meditation Can Help Reduce Addiction Relapse Rates

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An approach to meditation called "mindfulness," which teaches self-awareness, can be effective in preventing relapses of drug and alcohol abuse, a new study suggests.

Mindfulness meditation aims to help people understand what drives cravings, and to better deal with the discomfort they create.

Researchers at the University of Washington studied 286 people who had successfully completed a substance abuse treatment program, and randomly assigned them to one of three groups: mindfulness meditation, a 12-step program, and a traditional relapse-prevention program.

They found a treatment program that incorporates mindfulness meditation was more effective in preventing relapses over the long term, compared with traditional addiction treatment approaches, according to *Reuters*.

One year after treatment, about 9 percent of participants in the mindfulness program reported drug use, compared with 14 percent of those in a 12-step program, and 17 percent in a traditional relapse-prevention program.

About 8 percent of participants in the mindfulness program also reported heavy drinking after one year, compared with about 20 percent in the other two groups.

The findings appear in *JAMA Psychiatry*.

Researcher Sarah Bowen noted about 11 percent of people in the United States with substance abuse problems seek treatment annually, and between 40 to 60 percent relapse.

Many traditional relapse prevention programs include a 12-step program that emphasizes abstinence. Others are based on cognitive-behavioral therapy, which teaches people to confront and deal with particular situations, such as refusing alcohol and drugs.

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