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LIVING

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Help memory with meditation

Meditation may help prevent memory loss and even reverse it according to Dr. Dharma Singh Khalsa, founding president and medical director of the Alzheimer's Research and Prevention Foundation in Tucson.



Strategic Aging
WILLIAM ARNOLD

"Kirtan Kriya (pronounced Keertun Kreea) is a type of meditation from the Kundalini yoga tradition which has been practiced for thousands of years. This meditation is sometimes called a singing exercise as it involves singing the sounds Saa Taa Naa Maa along with repetitive finger

movements, or mudras," Khalsa said. "The meditation can be adapted to several lengths, but practicing it for just 12 minutes a day has been shown to be beneficial to cognitive health. In Sanskrit, a kirtan is a song, and kriya refers to a specific set of movements. In the Eastern tradition, kriyas are

used to help bring the body, mind and emotions into balance to enable healing."

Khalsa and many colleagues have published studies on the use of this meditation.

One study published in 2010 took a group of subjects who were proven to suffer from memory loss and found that Kirtan Kriya, performed 12 minutes a day for eight weeks, increased brain activity in areas central to memory and improved cognition and well-being in patients with memory loss.

Researchers used brain scans before and after the eight-week program. They also had control groups that did not perform the meditation.

Without going into the neural anatomy, they found this meditation stimulated the core of the brain.

"Replacing the Kirtan Kriya sounds with other sounds, or replacing the meditation as a whole with other relaxing tasks, has not been shown to have the same effect," Khalsa said.

This meditation is from the Kundali-

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ni yoga tradition as taught by Yogi Bha-jan. It is not a religious practice.

Khalsa said that meditation is part of his focus on brain longevity which goes with what he calls the four pillars — diet and supplements, exercise both physical and mental, stress management and, when appropriate, medications.

Khalsa did a follow-up study that was just published on the use of meditation to aid caregivers of dementia patients. He and his colleagues published studied 39 caregivers with an average age of 60. The researchers placed half of the group into the meditation training and the older group listened to relaxation music for 12 minutes a day for eight weeks.

They assessed the severity of depressive symptoms, mental and cognitive functioning before the sessions and then after the eighth week. The meditative group showed significant lowering of depressive symptoms and a significant increase in mental and cognitive functioning.

Khalsa and I agree that talking with your physician or contacting the Alz-

RESOURCES

- » Khalsa and the Foundation: www.alzheimersprevention.org/index.php.
- » Quiz: www.alzheimersreadingroom.com/p/topic-test-your-memory-for-alzheimers.html.
- » Alzheimer's Association: www.alz.org/dsw/ or call 800-272-3900.

CONFERENCE

What: 2012 Arizona Alzheimer's Consortium Annual Conference, 8-11:30 a.m. May 25 at Rio Vista Recreation Center, 8866 W. Thunderbird Road, Peoria.

Details: This free event features information and ongoing advances in the diagnosis and treatment of Alzheimer's disease.

Information: 602-845-9788 to register.

heimer's Association can help you assess if you are dealing with memory loss and possible dementia.

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