

MEDITATE FOR MENTAL STRENGTH

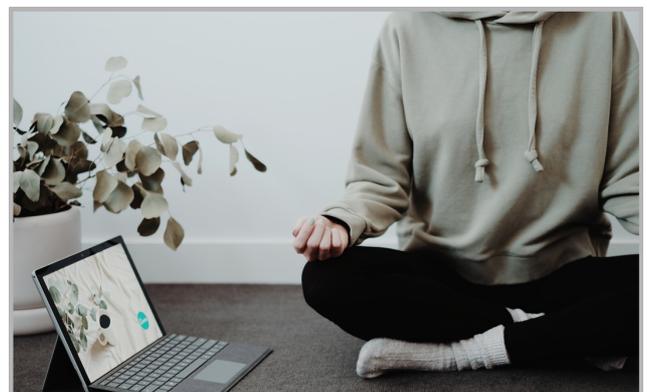
Where there's a will, there's a way. This 400-year-old proverb expresses the universal truth that if you really want something, you'll persist until you succeed. Are your commitment muscles lacking? Do you find yourself saying, "I'll do it tomorrow." or, "I don't want it that bad". Meditation can boost your mental strength, firing up your will and getting you on your way.

Lifting weights increases blood flow to your working muscles, contributing to them getting bigger and more efficient at handling larger workloads. Like your muscles, your brain is trainable. Given the right exercise stimulus, your brain bulks up and performs faster.

Meditation increases blood flow to the prefrontal cortex. This area is home to your highest cognitive abilities called the executive functions. The prefrontal cortex is the head office through which you can become the CEO of your life.

Kelly McGonigal, Ph.D. is an award-winning professor and the creator of Stanford University's, "The Science of Willpower" class. Her book, "The Willpower Instinct" captures all her self-control goodness in easy-to-understand wisdom that you can apply to crushing it today.

Kelly reports that just three hours of meditation practice improved attention and self-control in the research subjects. After eleven hours, researchers could observe the changes in the brain that validated the improved performance. The brain regions responsible for maintaining focus, shutting out distractions, and managing impulses showed increased neural connections.



Paul Larmer is a mindfulness coach, personal trainer and professional speaker. Book a session for yourself or your team, plarmer@livnorth.com

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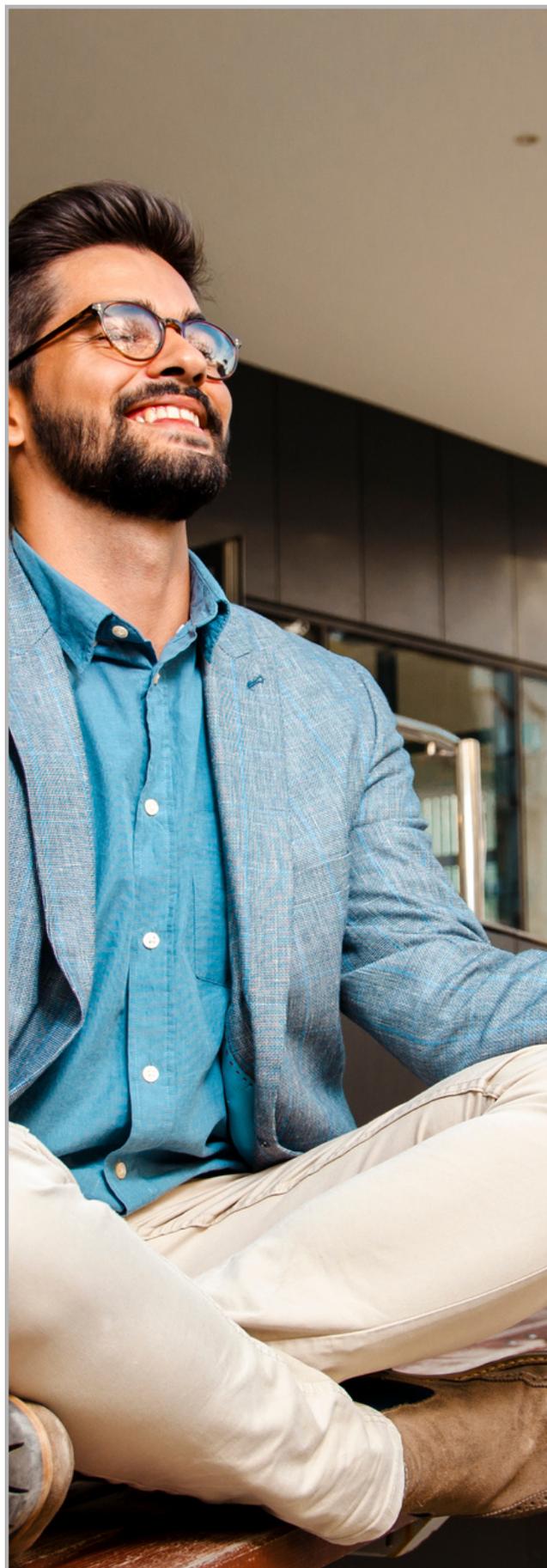
Neuroscientists have found that these changes in the brain do not only make meditators better at meditating but fire up the whole toolbox of executive functions, including attention, focus, organization, observation, and stress tolerance that translate to performing better at work, improving your health, and turning away from temptation.

The exercise of meditation doesn't train a specific behaviour. It develops neural programs for pausing before you act. You notice what you are about to do, and you make another choice. University of Kentucky psychologist, Suzanne Segerstrom, called this the pause-and-plan response.

Segerstrom's research focuses on how states of mind like hope and stress impact the body. She discovered that self-control has a biological signature – heart rate slows down, blood pressure normalizes, breathing deepens, and the body relaxes. The prefrontal cortex initiates this cascade effect through its control over lower brain regions that are otherwise more reactionary in nature.

Meditation exercises the prefrontal cortex, causing an increase in growth and performance that develops the pause-and-plan response. This reduces the overall influence of the fight-and-flight factor and puts the lever of self-control more decidedly in your hands.

Use your willpower wisely. Invest what you have in a few minutes of meditation daily to grow your self-control muscles and experience the benefits of mental strength in all areas of your life.



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