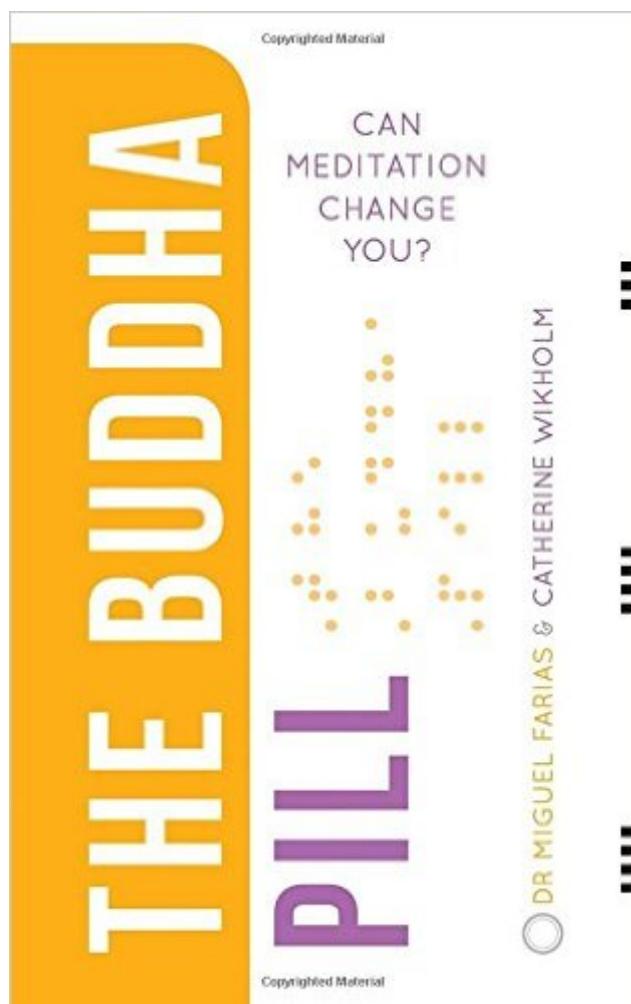


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The Buddha Pill: Can Meditation Change You?



Synopsis

Millions of people meditate daily but can meditative practices really make us â ^betterâ ™ people? In The Buddha Pill, pioneering psychologists Dr Miguel Farias and Catherine Wikholm put meditation and mindfulness under the microscope. Separating fact from fiction, they reveal what scientific research â “ including their groundbreaking study on yoga and meditation with prisonersâ “ tells us about the benefits and limitations of these techniques for improving our lives. As well as illuminating the potential, the authors argue that these practices may have unexpected consequences, and that peace and happiness may not always be the end result.â Offering a compelling examination of research on transcendental meditation to recent brain-imaging studies on the effects of mindfulness and yoga, and with fascinating contributions from spiritual teachers and therapists, Farias and Wikholm weave together a unique story about the science and the delusions of personal change.

Book Information

Paperback: 276 pages

Publisher: Watkins Publishing (May 26, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1780287186

ISBN-13: 978-1780287188

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.9 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 starsâ See all reviewsâ (21 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,012,465 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #38 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Psychology & Counseling > Medicine & Psychology #2632 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Psychology & Counseling > Counseling #4880 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Alternative Medicine > Meditation

Customer Reviews

I highly recommend this book! I found it through a short article by the authors in New Scientist magazine. I loved this book for multiple reasons. The authors write in a clear style and they make the subject matter very interesting. They take a skeptical approach to meditation and yoga that is sorely lacking these days. The authors seem to take a fair and balanced approach to the topic of meditation. They clearly show a personal interest in the topic, but they also show an interest in being critical and scientific in their thinking. They mention their own experiences, they ask others

about their experiences, they speak with meditation teachers and they also review the scientific literature on meditation. I found it particularly helpful that the authors review some of the history of the "Western" interest in meditation and scientific study of it. They start with Transcendental Meditation (TM), because the interest in TM and the claims made about its use were very similar to the current claims made about mindfulness meditation, meditation generally and yoga. People tried to argue that TM could help with a large number of problems and TM could make you a better person. The research on TM lacked decent methodology, though. When the methodology was good, the results that were unfavorable were not publicized. One of the few studies of TM with decent methodology failed to show it was better than placebo meditation (most research on meditation, almost ALL of it, lacks a decent control group or useful placebo even though it is possible to develop a good placebo for it). Similar problems can be seen with mindfulness meditation research. The authors exhaustively reviewed the mindfulness research prior to writing the book and they summarize their findings in the book.

Can practice of contemplative techniques bring lasting personal change? If yes, how much and how do they work? If changes occur, are they always for the better? Two Oxford psychologists address these questions by teasing out the empirical evidence from the myths about meditation. The authors examine 40 years of clinical studies on the effects of Transcendental Meditation, popularized by Maharishi Maheshi Yogi, and Mindfulness meditation that currently has many advocates. The authors also conducted scientific experiments on the effects of yoga meditation on inmates within U.K. prisons. Conclusions included: 1. Scientific evidence is weak for lasting physiological change from meditation practice. 2. Only modest changes for practitioners of meditation. Yet many who use or teach meditation techniques make astonishing claims about their powers. 3. Meditation gives rise to different mental states, but there is nothing physiologically extraordinary going on. 4. Clinical research is poorly conducted: has small sample sizes, lacks control groups, and is rife with problematic biases. They explain why in detail. 5. There is a dark side to meditation--psychosis, breakdowns, and violent behaviors--that seldom is spoken of by meditation advocates and practitioners. Farias and Wikholm are practitioners and sympathetic to meditation. However, their investigations reveal what most practitioners must learn the hard way. That, meditation is not a panacea, it is often advocated as a magic pill, and may bring seldom discussed negative side effects. This groundbreaking book will bring you current, in an engaging and easy to understand style, with the scientific evidence for benefits and adverse effects of meditation practices.

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