

# **Mindfulness Meditation: A Remedy for Creativity Under Avoidance Motivation?**

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Compared with approach motivation, avoidance motivation has consistently been shown to undermine creativity, because it evokes anxiety and inflexible information processing. Tackling this for creative tasks disadvantageous processing style with open monitoring meditation could enhance creativity under avoidance motivation. We used a creative idea generation task (AUT) to test if people high (vs. low) in avoidance motivation show reduced creativity compared to people high (vs. low) in approach motivation. We expected that people higher in avoidance motivation generated less and less original ideas compared to people lower in avoidance motivation. We hypothesized that mindfulness meditation would buffer the negative consequences of avoidance motivation on creativity.

Participants were randomly assigned to the mindfulness meditation condition ( $n = 63$ ) or the control condition ( $n = 64$ ). Motivational orientation was assessed with the Approach Avoidance Temperament Questionnaire. In the mindfulness condition, participants listened to a meditation fragment paying attention to the present moment. Then, participants conducted the AUT measuring creativity.

Regression analyses revealed that avoidance motivation did not predict fluency,  $F(1, 121) = .22$ ,  $p = .638$ , or originality  $F(1, 121) = .35$ ,  $p = .556$ . Additionally, mindfulness meditation did not moderate the relationship between avoidance motivation and creativity,  $F(1, 121) = .39$ ,  $p = .534$  for originality, and  $F(1, 121) = .07$ ,  $p = .797$  for fluency. Interestingly, we found a marginally significant main effect of condition on originality,  $F(1, 121) = 3.81$ ,  $p = .053$ ,  $\eta^2 = .03$ , indicating higher originality scores for participants in the mindfulness condition ( $M = 0.90$ ,  $SD = 0.04$ ) compared to participants in the control condition ( $M = 0.88$ ,  $SD = 0.04$ ). Mindfulness, however, did not influence fluency,  $F(1, 121) = .11$ ,  $p = .740$ .

The data only partially supported the expected impact of mindfulness meditation on creativity. We found that mindfulness meditation promotes originality, but not the number of creative ideas generated. In contrast to our expectations, people's levels of avoidance and approach motivation did not influence their creative performance.

Altogether, these results indicate that mindfulness meditation training, although not moderating the link between avoidance motivation and creativity, increases originality in a creativity task.