

"HEARTFULNESS MEDITATION: A PATHWAY TO PHYSIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLNESS- A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW"

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ABSTRACT

Background: Heartfulness Meditation has been associated with various physiological benefits through its influence on autonomic nervous system regulation and stress reduction. Heartfulness Meditation helps to replace negative thoughts and may relieve stress and depression and promote positive energy. Meditation with deep breathing enables individuals to stay with presence of mind actively and provide more control to regain balance in mind and body. **Objective:** The purpose of the present systematic review is to identify the effectiveness of Heartfulness Meditation and further examine whether Heartfulness Meditation helps to reduce physiological parameters like heart rate, blood Sugar, blood pressure, and body mass index and psychological parameters like depression, anxiety, stress, and emotions and improve the quality of life among adults. **Methods:** The literature is systematically searched for studies focusing on heartfulness meditation intervention targeting adults using relevant search terms in major databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar, Web of Science Core Collection, and PubMed, based on the selection criteria. The relevant existing studies published between 1st January 2010 and 30th March 2025 were included in the present review. **Results:** Heartfulness meditation is used in adults for reducing physiological and psychological parameters and improving various outcomes. Based on selection criteria, 20 (twenty) articles were identified and included in the final review. The sample size, intervention duration, and outcome measures have varied based on its study objectives. Overall, the Heartfulness meditation can provide an effective alternative and promising non-pharmaceutical approach to the management of physiological and psychological health of adults. **Conclusion:** Research indicates that Heartfulness-based meditation may help people with psychological and physiological problems like depression, anxiety, stress, and emotion as well as physiological characteristics like body mass index, blood pressure, blood sugar, and heart rate. However, there is a need for good quality experimental studies with randomized controlled trials examining the efficacy of Heartfulness meditation.

Keywords: Heartfulness Meditation, Physiological, Psychological, Wellness

INTRODUCTION

Heartfulness meditation is a practice that focuses on the heart as the center of one's being and encourages cultivating inner peace and emotional well-being.¹ It is a form of meditation that blends relaxation techniques with self-awareness and mindfulness to promote mental, emotional, and physiological health.² The self-help practice of heartfulness meditation is beneficial for mental and physical well-being.³ This practice can help manage stress, enhance

heart health, and foster a positive outlook by encouraging relaxation, emotional well-being, and overall balance.⁴ Anyone wishing to organically enhance their physical and emotional well-being can use this easily accessible tool.⁵

Heartfulness Meditation is utilized to regulate and relax the mind and expand consciousness, ultimately leading to a permanent state of wakefulness, not only during meditation time but also at all other times.⁶ It is not intended to visualize light, but rather the subtlest suggestion of lightness and purity, closely associated with the quality of nothingness that is described by the Heartfulness philosophy.⁷ Heartfulness meditation is a messenger that takes us on an endless journey; it takes us to move from selfishness to altruism, from a reactive mind to a responsive heart, from restlessness to peace, from imbalance to balance, and from darkness to light⁸. This form of meditation has been evaluated in numerous settings, specifically healthcare, schools, counselling centers, and corporate wellness centers, and has been shown to improve physical health and psychological and psychosocial issues such as burnout, sleep quality, stress, anxiety, depression, quality of life, and loneliness^{9, 10, 11}. Further, Heartfulness meditation is also helpful to improve cognitive function, cognitive skill development, and cognition^{9, 12, 13}.

Adults are facing numerous psychosocial problems, and in the late-life period, they need physical, emotional, and psychological support from the family members and even society.^{14, 15} Early proper diagnosis of psychosocial symptoms and effective management are required to improve the quality of life of adults suffering from various issues related to psychosocial comorbidities.⁶ The most prominent psychosocial issue is depression, the most prevalent mental health problem among adults, and it contributes to increased comorbidities, social deprivation, loneliness, cognitive decline, suicidal ideation, and mortality; it reduces quality of life and elevates normal daily life activities. Previous studies also stated that Heartfulness meditation reduces perceived stress, decreases burnout, and improves emotional well-being and sleep quality in adults.^{6, 15} Very rare studies only found in the literature implement heartfulness meditation with the adults to come out of physiological and psychological health issues. Hence, a systematic review is needed to identify the interventional effectiveness of Heartfulness meditation with adults who suffer from physiological and psychological health-related problems in their lives. Heartfulness meditation serves as an effective self-help treatment for both physiological and psychological health. By promoting relaxation, emotional well-being, and overall balance, this practice can help manage stress, improve heart health, and encourage a positive mind-set. It's an accessible tool for anyone looking to improve their physiological and psychological health naturally.

NEED OF THE STUDY

Heartfulness is a form of meditation and lifestyle practice that emphasizes calming the mind, opening the heart, and connecting with a deeper sense of inner self. The need for such a practice has become increasingly relevant in today's fast-paced and complex world.

- Stress and Anxiety Management
- Improved Mental Clarity and Focus
- Emotional Balance
- Inner Peace and fulfilment
- Spiritual Growth
- Healthy Lifestyle Integration

Heartfulness is needed because it addresses the core challenges of modern life-disconnection, stress, and lack of clarity-with a simple yet profound solution. It supports well-being at the mental, emotional, and spiritual levels, helping people live with calmness, compassion, and conscious awareness.

AIM OF THE STUDY

To provide a comprehensive and unbiased summary of existing research on a Heartfulness Meditation by systematically identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing all relevant studies.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Design: The researcher followed guidelines on PRISMA (2009).

Search strategy and selection criteria: Electronic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and Medline Web of Science, Core Collection, and PubMed are searched with a time limit between January 2015 and 2025, as well as limits with English language only. The search terms in databases were “Heartfulness,” “Heartfulness meditation,” “Heart rate,” “Blood pressure,” “Random Blood Sugar,” “Body Mass Index,” “Depression,” “Anxiety,” “Stress,” and “Emotion.” One and the combination of 10 keywords were used as a searching strategy in this review article. Further, all the articles that came under the inclusion criteria were examined and reviewed.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria:

In the present study has been followed carefully about the following inclusion criteria:

- Have published between 2015 and 2025
- Has been published in English
- Participants must be adults.
- Studies must have implemented Heartfulness meditation intervention for adults
- Experimental or quasi-experimental randomized controlled trials, prospective observational studies, and previous systematic reviews with adults related to heartfulness meditation are considered eligible.

The following exclusion criteria have been adopted in this study:

- Cross-sectional studies
- Psychometric or validation studies on paediatric, older adult, or related scales or test
- Studies lacking full-text accessibility
- Case-control studies were excluded from the present review study.

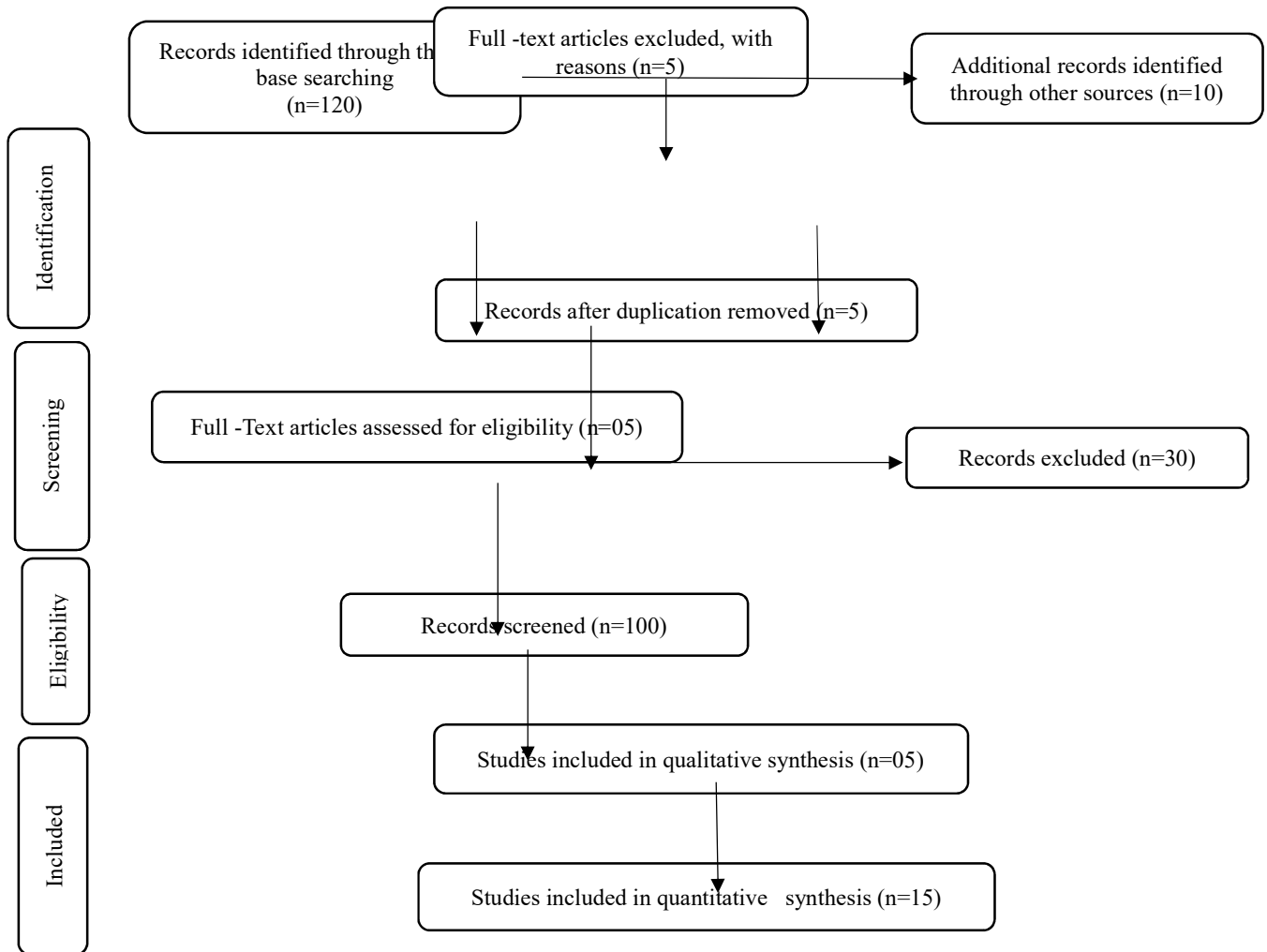


Figure 1: PRISMA Flow chart showing the selection of studies

Results: After entering the keywords into databases, 120 studies were finally retrieved after removing duplication, and at the end, based on the selection criteria, 30 studies were reviewed for the present study. The researcher read the full texts of selected articles, and those articles that did not meet the inclusion criteria (not access full text) were excluded again. Hence, finally, 20 articles only met the required criteria, which include 3 systematic reviews, and the rest of them were randomized controlled trials. Such articles have been selected for the further research process. All the selected articles have been published in the English language that was

Table No: 01 in Table 1.

Sr. No.	Study Author	Year of Study	Population	Sample Size	Research Design	Instruments used	Outcome of Study
1	Dalpatadu KPC, Galappatthy P,	2022	Type-2 Diabetes Mellitus	172	RCT	HbA1c. FBSL fructosamine, insulin resistance 24-h	Effect of mindfulness meditation on glycaemic control and the possible mechanisms (neuro

	Katulanda P, Jayasinghe S.					urinary cortisol, BMI, cardiac autonomic reflex testing and orocecal transit time using hydrogen breathe analysis.	humoral and autonomic functions) by which beneficial effects are mediated.
2	Van der Zwan JE, de Vente W, Huizink AC, Bögels SM, de Bruin EI.	2015	Healthy Adults	126	RCT	Questionnaire	Reduced stress, anxiety and depressive symptoms, and improved psychological well-being and sleep quality. No significant between-intervention effect was found, suggesting that PA, MM, and HRV-BF are equally effective in reducing stress and its related symptoms.
3	Chen Y, Yang X, Wang L, Zhang X.	2013	Chinese nursing students	60	RCT	Self-Rating Anxiety Scale and Self-Rating Depression Scale	Differences between pre- and post-treatment Self-Rating Anxiety Scale scores were significantly larger in the meditation group than in the control group, but no similar effect was observed for Self-Rating Depression Scale scores. Systolic blood pressure was reduced more after the intervention in the meditation group than in the control group, with an average reduction of 2.2 mmHg.

4	Arya NK, Singh K, Malik A, Mehrotra R.	2018	Healthy Individual	30	Pre Test –Post Design	Stethoscope sphygmomano meter	There was a significant effect of cleaning and meditation on the normalized unit of power in the low-frequency band (LFnu) for the three conditions [F (2, 87) = 9.98, $p < 0.01$] with mean values for baseline being 70.82 ± 14.55 , cleaning being 55.62 ± 15.06 , and meditation being 55.17 ± 16.63 . There was also a significant effect of cleaning and meditation on normalized unit of power in high-frequency band (HFnu) [F (2, 87) = 7.31, $p < 0.01$] with mean values for baseline being 30.86 ± 16.51 , cleaning being 44.37 ± 15.06 , and meditation being 44.83 ± 16.63 . A significant effect of cleaning and meditation was also seen for LF/HF [F (2, 87) = 4.98, $p < 0.01$], with mean values for baseline being 3.45 ± 3.40 , cleaning being 1.63 ± 1.30 , and meditation being 1.82 ± 2.19 .
5	Gunjan Y, Trivedi V, Meghal H, Meghana J.	2020	Healthy Women	84	RCT	Positive and Negative Affect Scale and Stethoscope	HRV parameters showed a statistically Significant improvement in the experiment group as compared to the control group. There was a statistically significant reduction in negative affect after both the

							practices, and the increase in Positive affect was observed only for the experiment group.
6	Haripriya.M, Dr.N.Sharvani, Dr.V.Vanajakshamma,4Dr.Sharan.B.Singh M Dr.VS.Kiranmay,D Kishorenaick.	2023	Coronary Artery Patients	90	RCT	Stethoscope sphygmomano meter	Meditation treatment shows significant improvements in quality of life, heart rate reduction, and blood Pressure control ($p < 0.001^*$) in patients with coronary artery disease.
7	Pujitha Kunati, M Sharan B Singh, Vanajakshamma, N Sharvani, VS Kiranmayi	2024	Medical College Female Students	60	prospective longitudinal study	kg/height in m ² Stethoscope sphygmomano meter, Blood Test	The vital signs and cortisol levels in female medical students were significantly changed after practicing heartfulness meditation for six months. There was a significant decrease in Pulse Rate (PR) ($p < 0.001$), RR ($p < 0.001$), Systolic Blood Pressure (SBP) ($p < 0.001$) and Diastolic Blood Pressure (DBP) ($p < 0.001$) and cortisol levels ($p < 0.001$) after 6 months practice of heartfulness meditation.
8	Tiwari S	2021	Nursing Students	40	Pre Test Posttest design	Knowledge questionnaire	In pretest, college students had moderate knowledge (82.5%), (17.5%) students had inadequate knowledge, and none of college students had adequate knowledge regarding Meditation therapy The minimum mean percentage is

							80.58% with standard deviation 0.79 in the aspect of Indication. The overall Knowledge mean percentage in Posttest is 87.90% and standards deviation 2.63.
9	Vijaya Chandra Reddy Konda, Mounica Reddy Pillaram, Visweswara Rao Guthi, Vanajakshamma Velam	2025	HTN patient	112	RCT	Stethoscope MINICHAL scale	A significant reduction in mean systolic and diastolic blood pressure in the intervention group compared to baseline (136.71 ± 8.64 vs 130.31 ± 8.78 , $p < 0.001$ for systolic BP and 82.78 ± 7.30 vs 77.44 ± 7.55 , $p < 0.001$ for diastolic BP). Group. There was also a significant improvement in mental domain, somatic domain, and overall quality of life in the intervention group.
10	Amarnath GR, Prasanthi J, Sharma N, Jenitha S, Rajan C	2019	Healthy Individual	53	Pre Test –Post Test design	Height ,Weight & Total daily energy expenditure (TDEE)	The results revealed partially-significant improvement in BMI and BMR with respect to time after performing Samarpan Meditation especially in male participants. Samarpan Meditation helps participants to normalize their BMI and BMR.
11	Heinrich DS, O'Connell KA	2023	Nursing Students	145	RCT	Perceived Stress Scale and the Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 Scale.	Participants in the experimental group, who received meditation recordings, experienced significantly lower levels of stress and anxiety on posttest surveys than the control group.

12	Gupta PK, Malhotra N, Goel P, Thimmapuram J, Krishna P.	2023	Female students	240	prospective cohort	Perceived Stress (PSS) and Satisfaction with Life (SWLS)	Statistically significant reduction of PSS scores from 20.79 to 18.96, and an increase in the SWLS scores from 22.03 to 23.51 from baseline to the end of the study period.
13	Holden S, O'Connell KA.	2023	Nursing students	60	RCT	DASS Scale	Statistically significant decrease in reported scores for depression, stress, and anxiety in the experimental group
14	Thakur M, Patil Y, Philip ST, Hamdude T, Thimmapuram J, Vyas N, Thakur K.	2023	Healthy individuals (18-24Years)	100	RCT	Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI), Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), WHO-Well-being Index (WHO-WBI) and Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ).	The cortisol levels in the meditators group significantly decreased after the intervention as compared to the non-meditators group, whereas, the telomere length increased in the mediators group. Anxiety and perceived stress decreased and well-being as well as mindfulness increased. A negative correlation was observed between telomere length and cortisol whereas a positive correlation was found between telomere length and well-being.
15	Subramanian SK, Sripad VD, Dharmalingam A, Guhan VN, Kalidoss VK, Gautam N, Shankaralingappa A, Rajendran R, Mohiuddin SG.	2022	COVID-19 patients	50	RCT	Perceived stress score, Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index questionnaire, CBC, serum cortisol, inflammatory parameters, oxidative stress parameters,	After 4 weeks of intervention, observed a significant decrease in stress, circulating cortisol, inflammatory markers, and oxidative stress biomarker in both the groups. Further, we observed improved sleep quality and antioxidant biomarkers in both the groups.

						and antioxidant parameters	
16	Desai K, Gupta P, Parikh P, Desai A.	2021	COVID-19 patients	63	Mixed Method Study	Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI)	A significant decrease in PSS (mean difference of 6.68 with 95% C.I. 4.89-8.47, $p < 0.0001$) and in PSQI (mean difference of 2.05 with 95% C.I. 1.03-3.07, $p < 0.0001$) between week zero and week eight.
17	Gupta PK, Thimmapuram J, Krishna P, Karmarkar Y, Madhusudhan DK.	2022	Accountant	206	Prospective cohort	Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) and Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)	Participants in the intervention group experienced statistically significant improvement in MBI emotional exhaustion from 2.17 to 1.75 and overall MBI score decreased from 2.99 to 2.83. Participants in the control group experienced statistically significant improvement for emotional exhaustion only, from 1.82 to 1.52. Further, participants in the intervention group demonstrated statistically significant improvement with SWLS from 4.90 to 5.17. While participants in the intervention group experienced higher levels of decline (19.55%) compared to the control group (16.41%) for emotional exhaustion, it was not statistically significant.
18	Gurram P, Narayanan V, Chandran S, Ramakrishnan	2021	Patients with third molar Surgery	60	Prospective intervention	Spielberger State - Trait Anxiety Inventory	The heartfulness meditation group reported less intraoperative anxiety (STAI - S)

	K, Subramanian A, Kalakumari AP				ional study	(STAI - T, STAI - S), Modified Dental Anxiety Scale (MDAS) and Numerical Rating Scale (NRS)	compared to the control group which was statistically significant ($P < 0.002$). There was a positive correlation between triat and situational anxiety levels of the participants.
19	Hoge EA, Bui E, Marques L, Metcalf CA, Morris LK, Robinaugh DJ, Worthington JJ, Pollack MH, Simon NM	2015	DSM-IV- diagnosed GAD	93	RCT	Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HAMA; primary outcome measure), the Clinical Global Impressions- Severity of Illness and - Improvement scales (CGI-S and CGI-I), and the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI).	Interventions led to significant ($P < .0001$) reductions in HAMA scores at endpoint, but did not significantly differ. MBSR, however, was associated with a significantly greater reduction in anxiety as measured by the CGI-S, the CGI-I, and the BAI (all P values $< .05$). MBSR was also associated with greater reductions than SME in anxiety and distress ratings in response to the TSST stress challenge ($P < .05$) and a greater increase in positive self- statements ($P = .004$).
20	Huberty J, Green J, Glissmann C, Larkey L, Puzia M, Lee C.	2019	College Students	88	RCT	Perceived Stress Scale	The majority of students in the intervention group reported that Calm was helpful to reduce stress and stated they would use Calm in the future. The majority were satisfied using Calm and likely to recommend it to other college students.

DISCUSSION

The results of this review study have demonstrated that the Heartfulness meditation program improves several outcomes, including physiological parameters like heart rate, blood pressure,

blood sugar, and body mass index, and psychological parameters like depression, anxiety, stress, and emotion. Also, studies with noticeable pre- and post-test differences in heart rate, breathing rate, and heart rate variability (HRV) were observed (Arya et al., 2018; Léonard et al., 2019).^{20, 38} The strength of this study is that it is reviewed in a real-world condition. In an outpatient-based outcome while implementing Heartfulness meditation, the completion of the meditation program by most of the participants may indicate the applicability of the study to those who choose Heartfulness practice for improving insomnia. The results of this study added to the existing literature to support the practices of meditation to improve physiological and psychological health.

A previous study was conducted using Heartfulness meditation with in-house staff, faculty physicians, and nurses, and it showed an improvement in emotional wellness (Thimmapuram et al., 2017).⁶ Another study was done to demonstrate the benefit of Heartfulness meditation among accounting professionals, and the findings stated that burnout and satisfaction with life improved. (Gupta et al., 2022).¹¹ Another study evaluated the effects of heartfulness training on perceived stress and sleep quality (Desai et al., 2021).¹⁰ They found that virtual heartfulness meditation was equivalent to in-person heartfulness training to reduce stress during and before the pandemic condition. It was also found that there were mixed findings about the improvement of sleep quality (Amarnath et al., 2017; Subramanian et al., 2022; Thimmapuram, Pargament, Tredici, et al., 2021; Yadav et al., 2021).^{6,16,39,40} In another study, an 8-week heartfulness-oriented meditation conducted virtually showed an improvement in the psychological well-being of female teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. (Desai et al., 2021).¹⁰ Thus, studies confirmed that both brief, virtual, and in-person Heartfulness meditation programs improved perceived stress, depression, emotional wellness, sleep quality, and loneliness among various participants. Cognitively, improvement in electroencephalogram (EEG) and functional MRI (fMRI) signal frequencies from the heart to the brain had been observed in regular practitioners of Heartfulness meditation. In addition, participants have mentioned in some studies that they can easily manage to overcome their feelings of insecurity, introverted behavior, anxiety, depression, psychological distress, and PTSD with the Heartfulness practice and felt more beneficial after the meditation (Gupta et al., 2022).¹¹

CONCLUSION

This systematic review evidenced that the Heartfulness meditation significantly improved various physiological and psychosocial issues, including perceived stress, insomnia, depression, sleep quality, emotional wellness, burnout, and anxiety. It appears to be easily incorporated with the participants' daily life, and also is cost effective, and requires no special guidance. The results of the studies seem to have promising effect with Heartfulness meditation. It is one of a beneficial non-pharmacological intervention for several psychosocial issues with chronic as well as acute problem. However, it was found that there is a gap in implementing heartfulness meditation in adults in improving symptoms of stress and depression, life satisfaction, and emotional wellbeing. Such studies may be warranted further in future. The researchers also recommend a larger randomized study to measure the efficacy of Heartfulness meditation for adults in future to overcome late-life issues.

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