

# [Altered Traits: Science Reveals How Meditation Changes Your Mind, Brain, and Body](#)

By Daniel Goleman and Richard J. Davidson

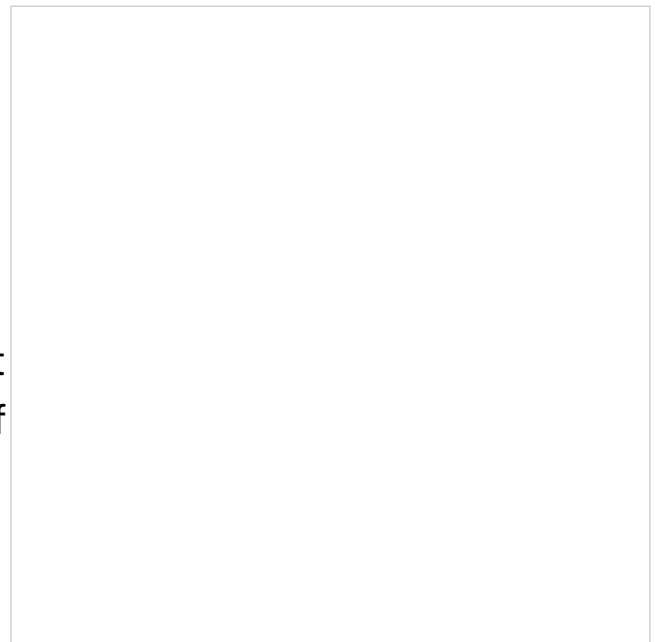
**Recommended on: 2nd November 2022**

[Altered Traits: Science Reveals How Meditation Changes Your Mind, Brain, and Body](#) by Daniel Goleman and

Richard J. Davidson. Barb spent the past week teaching about the neuroscience of teaching and learning at the Tergar Monastery in Kathmandu, Nepal. The Lead Abbot of the monastery is Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche, perhaps the best-studied yogi in the world ([here](#) is a

recent paper, co-authored by Davidson, summarizing the extraordinary differences in how Rinpoche's brain as compared to the brains of typical controls). *Altered Traits* gives a careful guide into what is known, and some of what is not known, about the neuroscience involved in various meditative processes. (For those wishing to dive deeper, here is [a synthesizing article](#), behind a pay wall except for the abstract, about the neuroscience of meditation.)

There is some evidence that focused types of meditation, such as those that rely on bringing back attention that wanders, may suppress the activities of



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the default mode network—the brain’s states of relaxation. This suppression can reduce anxiety, which is great. But there is perhaps a concomitant trade-off of reducing the mind-wandering that can sometimes be at the heart of creativity.

During his discussions with Barb, as well as in his book *The Joy of Living*, (a very informative book on Buddhist meditative practices), Rinpoche emphasized that there are many other forms of meditation, besides focused mode, with many different neural effects. It does seem, however, that many meditative practices begin with practice through focus, so it may good to be aware of potential tradeoffs in the type of meditative mind-training you may select. Meditation is indeed brain-changing!

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