

AI-Powered Literature Review Strategies for Students



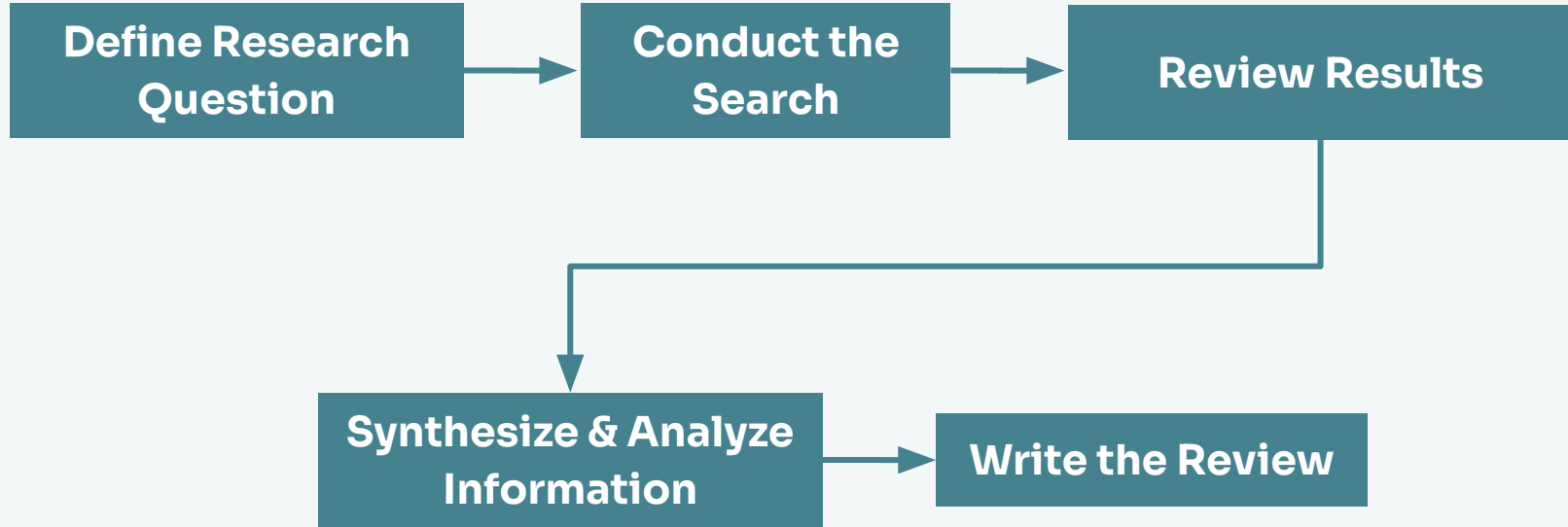
Janice Kung

Health Sciences Librarian, Sperber Library

janice.kung@ualberta.ca

May 14, 2026

Literature Review Process



A person with long dreadlocks, seen from behind, is sitting in a meditative lotus position on a rocky outcrop. They are wearing a black long-sleeved shirt and black pants. The background features a vast, rugged mountain range with steep, rocky peaks and lush green vegetation. A thick layer of white mist or clouds fills the valley below the person. The sky is filled with dramatic, colorful clouds in shades of blue, orange, and yellow, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The overall scene conveys a sense of tranquility and connection with nature.

What is the effect of daily mindfulness meditation on self-reported stress and cortisol levels in adults?



mindfulness meditation cortisol stress



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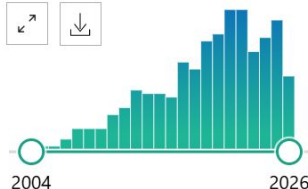
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Edit custom filters

RESULTS BY YEAR



PUBLICATION DATE

- ☐ 1 year
- ☐ 5 years
- ☐ 10 years
- ☐ Custom Range

TEXT AVAILABILITY

- ☐ Abstract

324 results



Page

1

of 33



1 **Yoga, mindfulness-based stress reduction and stress-related physiological measures: A meta-analysis.**

Cite

Pascoe MC, Thompson DR, Ski CF.

Psychoneuroendocrinology. 2017 Dec;86:152-168. doi: 10.1016/j.psyneuen.2017.08.008. Epub 2017 Aug 30.

PMID: 28963884

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES: Practices that include yoga asanas and **mindfulness-based stress** reduction for the management of **stress** are increasingly popular; however, the neurobiological effects of these practices on **stress** reactivity are not well unders ...



2 **Mindfulness mediates the physiological markers of stress: Systematic review and meta-analysis.**

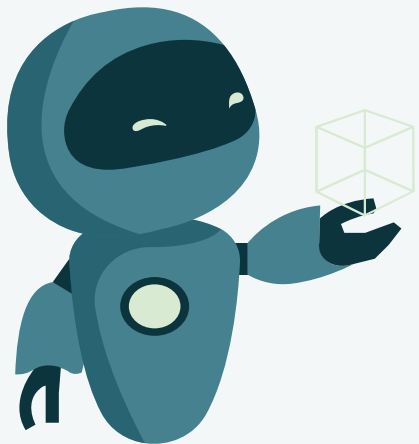
Cite

Pascoe MC, Thompson DR, Jenkins ZM, Ski CF.

J Psychiatr Res. 2017 Dec;95:156-178. doi: 10.1016/j.jpsychires.2017.08.004. Epub 2017 Aug 23.

PMID: 28863392

Meditation is a popular form of **stress** management, argued to mediate **stress** reactivity. However, many studies in this field commonly fail to include an active control group. ...Overall, **meditation** practice leads to decreased physiological markers of ...



How does Generative AI work?

Let's take a step back...

LLMs Create Tokens

GPT-3 Codex

Here is a sentence broken into tokens. Notice how most words are their own token, but that sometime names or complete words like ChatGPT, or mispeeled words, and , punctuation: , "are their" own tokens! As a rule of thumb for expressions in the English language there are approximately 750 words per 1000 tokens.

Clear

Show example

Tokens

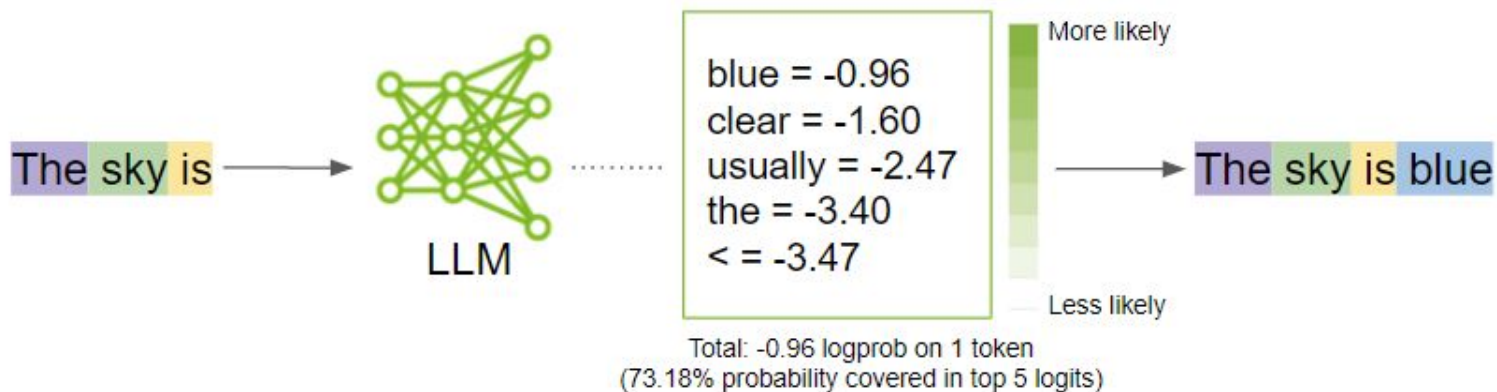
68

Characters

312

Here is a sentence broken into tokens. Notice how most words are their own token, but that sometime names or complete words like ChatGPT, or mispeeled words, and , punctuation: , "are their" own tokens! As a rule of thumb for expressions in the English language there are approximately 750 words per 1000 tokens.

Word Probability Calculators



Generative AI

- Creates new content based on patterns from training data.
- Waits for the human prompt before acting.

VS

Agentic AI

- AI agents incorporate generative capabilities to create or modify content.
- Humans don't need to guide each step.

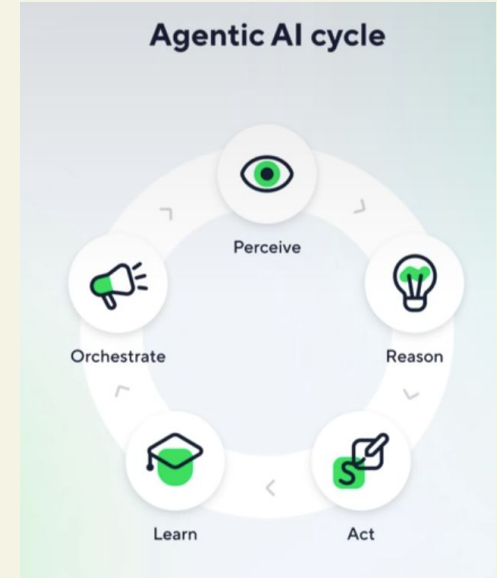


Image Source: [Wrike](#)

How to use AI effectively

Write Good Prompts:

- Be specific
- “Act as if...”
- Tell it how you want your output to be presented
- Use “do” and “don’t”
- Use examples
- Consider tone and audience
- Build on previous prompts
- Correct mistakes and give feedback
- “Ask me clarifying questions as needed”

Source: <https://www.huit.harvard.edu/news/ai-prompts>

When to use GenAI:

- As a thought partner
- Generate ideas, brainstorming, summarization
- For clarity, structure, and communication

Do NOT use it for:

- Interpretation
- Conclusions
- Making decisions

Using Generative AI in Research

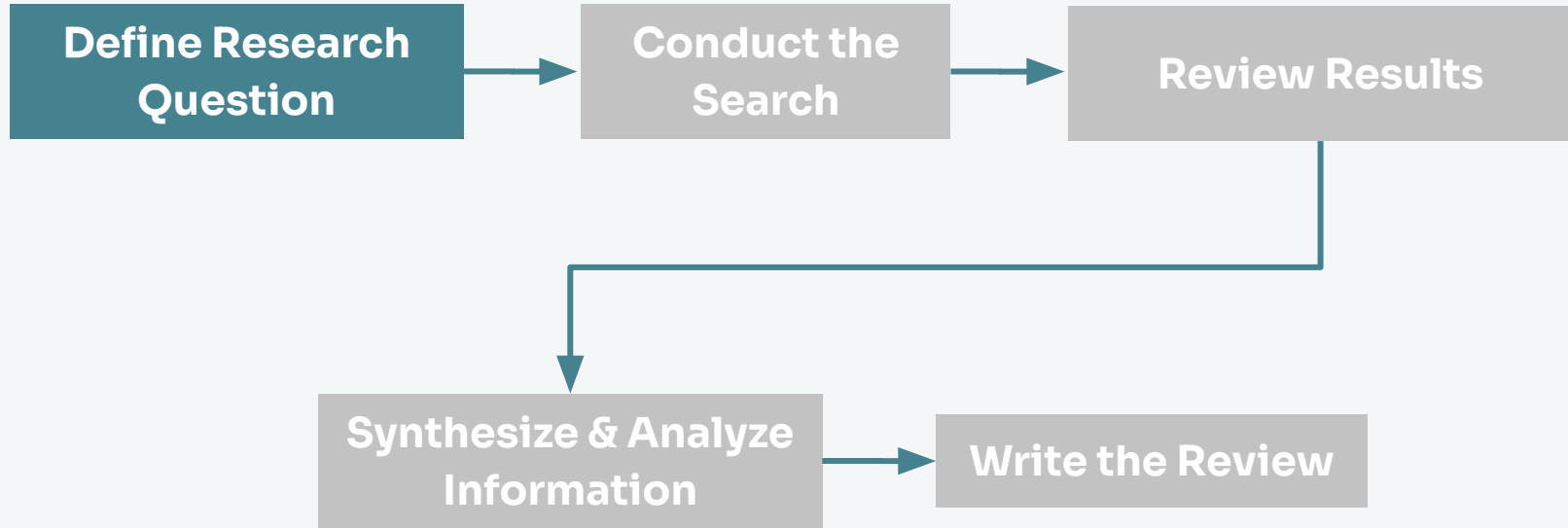
Framework for the Responsible Use of AI at the University of Alberta

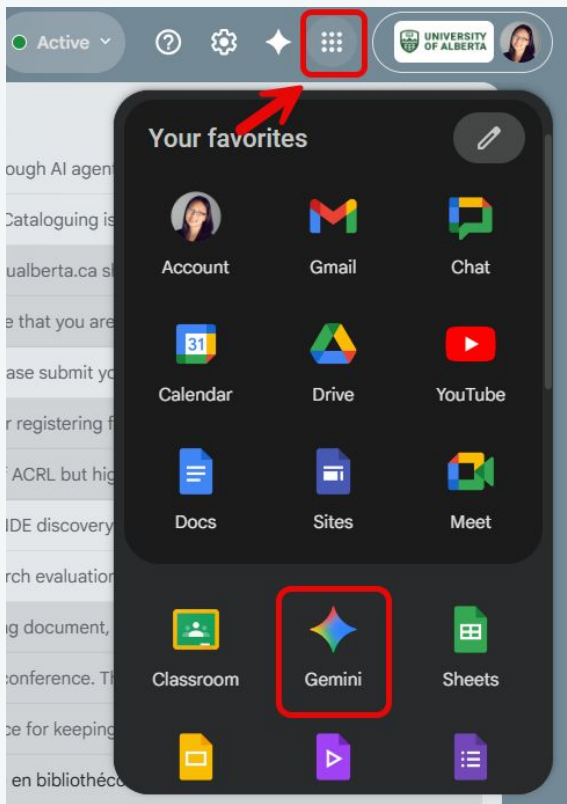
- Be transparent
- Be inclusive, equitable, and accessible
- Be mindful
- Be accountable
- Respect privacy and protect data
- Provide human oversight

** Important: Document AI use at beginning & throughout project

→ The Artificial Intelligence Disclosure (AID) Framework

Literature Review Process





ould we start?

Gemini

Create music

Help me learn

Write anything

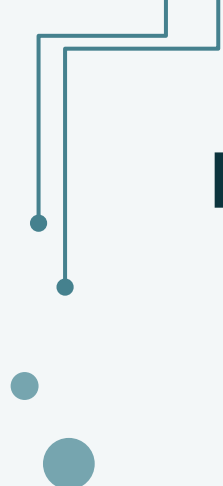
Fast

Gemini 3

Fast
Answers quickly

Thinking
Solves complex problems

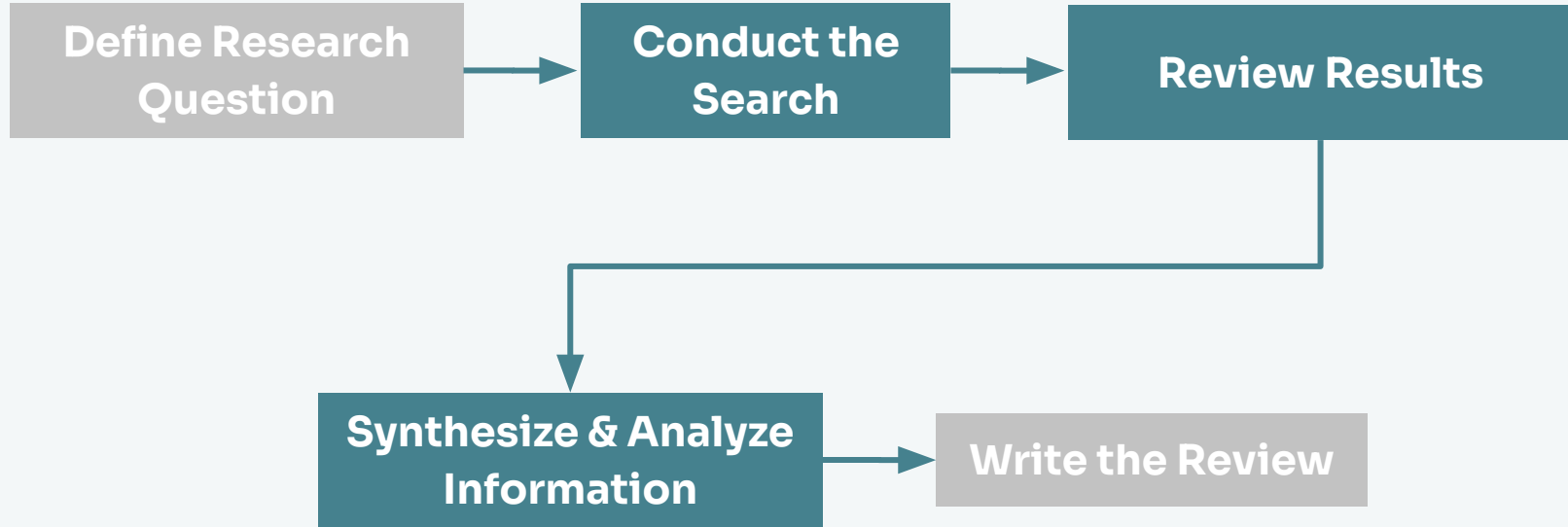
Pro
Advanced math and code with 3.1 Pro



Define Research Question

- “What does the scientific literature say about [topic]?”
- “Identify the gaps in the literature on [topic]”
- “Provide sample research questions for undergraduate students to explore concerning the role of CYP450 in antidepressant metabolism.”
- “Act like a biochemistry undergraduate student interested in membrane proteins associated with cancer. Generate 10 research questions that would be suitable for this type of topic.”

Literature Review Process





Conduct the Search & Review Results

Tools:

- Elicit
 - Consensus
 - Undermind
- Allow natural language searching
 - Conduct the literature search
 - Explore similar articles through citation chaining
 - Organize literature

Synthesize & Analyze Information

Tools:

- Elicit
- Consensus
- NotebookLM

Extract key insights, summarize findings

“Asking questions” of a particular scholarly article or group of articles

Create comparison tables based on default and customized criteria like (e.g., methodology, sample size, or key results, etc.)

Filtering & ranking – Allows filtering studies by credibility factors like randomized control trials.



Elicit: Overview

- Find papers
- Generates a summary of the topic
- Get a research report
- Start a systematic review (PRO only)
- Extract data from PDFs (upload/import from Zotero)

** It will try to upsell you fancy features when you use the free version!

A person with long dreadlocks, seen from behind, is sitting in a meditative lotus position on a rocky outcrop. They are wearing a black long-sleeved shirt and black pants. The background features a vast, rugged mountain range with steep, rocky peaks and lush green vegetation. A thick layer of white mist or clouds fills the valley below the person. The sky is filled with dramatic, colorful clouds in shades of blue, orange, and yellow, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The overall scene conveys a sense of tranquility and connection with nature.

What is the effect of daily mindfulness meditation on self-reported stress and cortisol levels in adults?

Impact of generative AI on student engagement and learning outcomes

⌘ Research agent ▾

General ▾



WORKFLOWS

⌘ Research agent

📄 Report

☰ Systematic review

🔒 PRO

TOOLS

🔍 Find papers

💬 Chat with papers

📄 Extract data

🔒 PRO

Suggested based on your work

⌘ Research agent

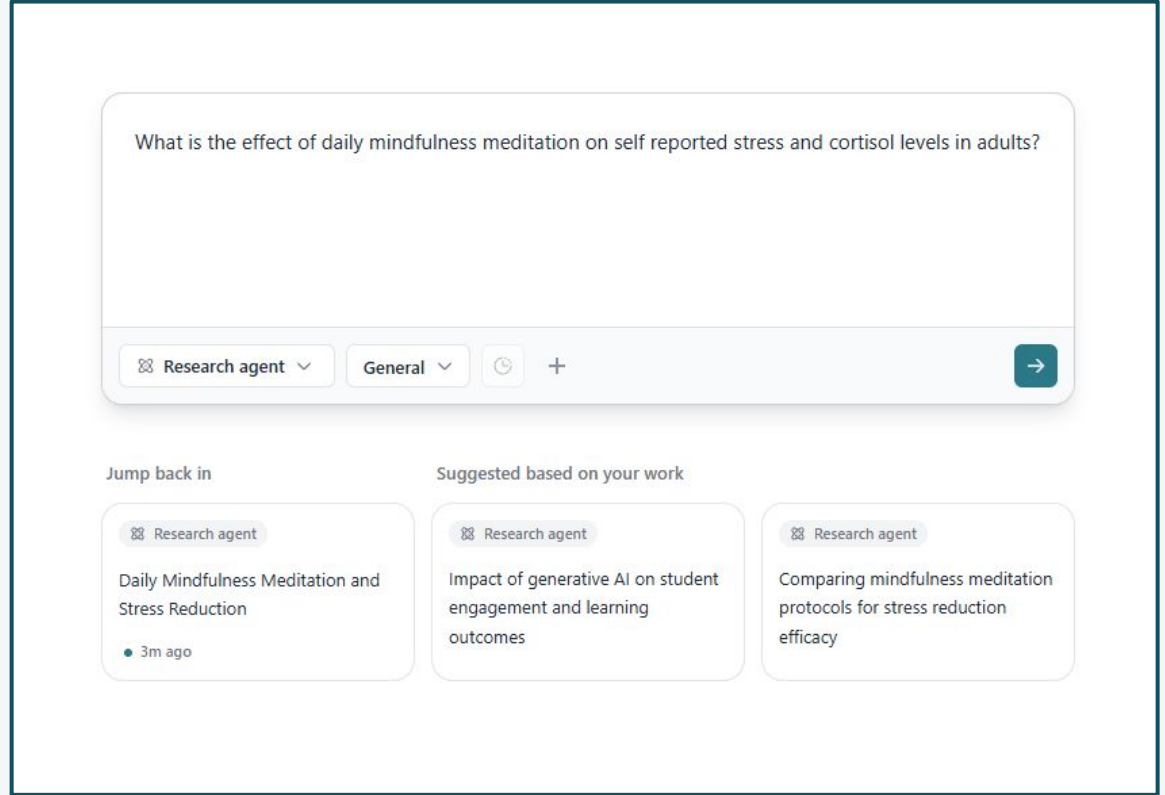
Impact of generative AI on student engagement and learning outcomes

⌘ Research agent

Comparing mindfulness meditation protocols for stress reduction efficacy

Research Agent

(agentic AI)



Research Agent

What is the effect of daily mindfulness meditation on self-reported stress and cortisol levels in adults?

I'll pull up meta-analyses and randomized trials on daily mindfulness meditation in adults, focusing on both self-reported stress and cortisol.

✓ Ran analysis

4 searches

- Academic · max 10 mindfulness meditation perceived stress cortisol adults review
- Academic · max 10 mindfulness-based stress reduction cortisol adults systematic review
- Academic · max 10 mindfulness meditation stress cortisol randomized trial adults

🕒 Sources considered: Mindfulness Meditation Stress and Cortisol

Searching for randomized trials and reviews on mindfulness meditation, self-reported stress, and cortisol in adults.

Across adult studies, mindfulness meditation looks more reliable for self-reported stress than for cortisol. Meta-analyses of MBSR and other mindfulness-based interventions found lower perceived stress after treatment, including a 30-study meta-analytic review that reported MBSR was significantly more effective than both active and inactive controls, and a newer meta-analysis in non-clinical adults that again found significantly lower perceived stress after intervention. [Champion](#)

For cortisol, the picture is mixed. A 2016 meta-analysis of five RCTs in healthy adults found a modest overall cortisol benefit, but a separate systematic review concluded that cortisol changes showed up in within-participant studies and not in randomized designs, which is a good warning sign that the biomarker effect is fragile. [O'Leary et al. 2016](#) +1 Individual trials go both ways: one 3-day mindfulness training study found lower self-reported stress but higher cortisol reactivity to a lab stressor, while an 8-week randomized trial in older adults found cortisol fell more in the mindfulness group only among those with high baseline cortisol.

So the practical read is: daily mindfulness meditation probably reduces perceived stress by a small-to-moderate amount, but you should not expect a consistent cortisol-lowering effect across adults. If cortisol changes, they seem more likely with longer or more intensive

Ask about anything you see, update your analysis, or explore a new direction



May 7, 2026

What is the effect of daily mindfulness meditation on self-reported stress and cortisol levels in adults?

Daily mindfulness meditation significantly reduces self-reported stress in adults with medium-to-large effect sizes sustained up to one year, and reduces cortisol levels with moderately low-to-large effects depending on measurement method, intervention duration, and baseline stress levels.

ABSTRACT

Daily mindfulness meditation interventions consistently reduced self-reported stress in adults, with seven of ten studies demonstrating significant effects. Traditional 8-week MBSR programs produced improvements of approximately 1 standard deviation on stress questionnaires *, with medium-to-large effect sizes ($d=0.73$) * and risk reductions for worsening stress of 54.6% *. These benefits were sustained at follow-up assessments ranging from 16 weeks to 1 year *. However, three studies found no significant effects on subjective stress despite showing biological changes *.

Effects on cortisol levels showed substantial heterogeneity dependent on measurement and intervention characteristics. A meta-analysis of five RCTs ($n=190$) found an overall moderately low effect size ($g=0.41$, $p=0.025$) *, which increased substantially to $g=0.81$ ($p=0.002$) when using standardized cortisol indices rather than raw measurements *. Individual studies using chronic exposure measures demonstrated robust effects, including median reductions of 3.9 pg/mg in hair cortisol ($p=0.003$) * and very large effects on morning salivary cortisol ($\eta^2p=0.23$, $p<.001$) *. Meta-regression revealed that younger age, greater number of sessions, and total intervention hours significantly predicted larger cortisol reductions, collectively explaining all observed heterogeneity ($R^2=1.00$) *. Three studies found no significant cortisol changes *. Mindfulness interventions incorporating acceptance training specifically reduced cortisol stress reactivity with medium effect sizes ($d=0.40-0.47$) *, and cortisol decreases were most pronounced in participants with elevated baseline levels *.

METHODS >

We analyzed 10 sources from an initial pool of 50, using 6 screening criteria. Each paper was reviewed for 5 key aspects that mattered most to the research question. [More on methods](#)

Report

Status

✓ Gather sources
50 sources found

Details ↗

✓ Screen sources
10 sources included

Details ↗

✓ Extract data
50 data points extracted

Details ↗

✓ Generate report

Save PDF



Chat

Ask anything about the results

Characteristics of Included Studies

The review included nine primary studies and one meta-analysis examining mindfulness meditation interventions in adult populations. Table 1 presents the key characteristics of all included studies.

Study	Full text retrieved?	Study Type	Sample Size	Population	Intervention
Geary & Rosenthal, 2011	Yes	Quasi-experimental *	IG: 59, CG: 94 *	University of Texas Medical Branch employees *	8-week mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) program
Klatt et al., 2009	Yes	RCT *	IG: 22, CG: 20 *	University faculty/staff ages 18-60 *	6-week mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) program
Sanada et al., 2016	Yes	Meta-analysis of 5 RCTs *	Total: 190 *	Healthy adults, mean age 38.50-67.09 years *	6-week mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) program
Lindsay et al., 2018	Yes	RCT (3-arm) *	Total: 153 *	Stressed adults, mean age 32 years *	15-week mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) program
Hoge et al., 2017	Yes	RCT *	IG: 43, CG: 29 *	Adults ≥18 years with GAD *	8-week mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) program
Wetherell et al., 2017	No (abstract only)	RCT *	Total: 103 *	Adults ≥65 years with anxiety/depression and cognitive complaints *	MI
Gherardi-Donato et al., 2023	Yes	RCT *	IG: 15, CG: 15 *	University employees with high stress (PSS ≥23) *	8-week mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) program

Report

Status

✓ Gather sources
50 sources found

Details ↗

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10 sources included

Details ↗

✓ Extract data
50 data points extracted

Details ↗

✓ Generate report

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Chat

Ask anything about the results



Does daily mindfulness meditation reduce cortisol levels in college students?

Find papers

Source Research papers



WORKFLOWS

Research agent

Report

Systematic review

PRO

TOOLS

Find papers

Chat with papers

Extract data

PRO

Suggested based on your work

Research agent

Does daily mindfulness meditation
reduce cortisol levels in college
students?

Research agent

Compare effects of campus events
on student anxiety vs depression
rates

What is the effect of daily mindfulness meditation on self-reported stress and cortisol levels in adults?

Send feedback

Sort: Most relevant	Search	Filters	Add a column	Export	UPGRADE	Save to library	Get full-texts
Paper	10 sources			Summary			
☐ Brief mindfulness meditation training alters psychological and neuroendocrine responses to social evaluative stress J. Creswell, Laura E. Pacilio, E. Lindsay, K. Brown Psychoneuroendocrinology , 2014, 361 citations, DOI Full text				Daily mindfulness meditation reduces self-reported stress * but may increase cortisol levels in adults, based on a study with 66 participants. *			
☐ Self-reported mindfulness and cortisol during a Shamatha meditation retreat. Tonya L. Jacobs, Phillip R. Shaver, E. Epel, A. Zanesco, Stephen R. Aichele, and 9 more Health Psychology , 2013, 83 citations, DOI PDF link available				Mindfulness meditation increased self-reported mindfulness * and was inversely related to cortisol levels, * but cortisol did not significantly change overall in 57 adults during a meditation retreat. *			
☐ Effects of Low-Dose Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR-Id) on Working Adults M. Klatt, J. Buckworth, W. Malarkey Health Education & Behavior , 2009, 386 citations, DOI Full text				Daily mindfulness meditation significantly reduces self-reported stress in adults *, with moderate evidence from a randomized control trial of 22 participants *, but effects on cortisol levels are not specified. *			
☐ Effects of mindfulness meditation on serum cortisol of medical students. W. Turakitwanakan, C. Mekseepalard, P. Busarakumtragul Journal of the Medical Association of Thailand = Chotmaihet thangkaet , 2013, 75 citations Abstract only				Mindfulness meditation significantly lowers cortisol levels in young adults, indicating reduced stress *, but does not significantly affect self-reported stress levels; based on a small sample of 30 participants with a before-and-after design using paired t-tests. *			
☐ Effects of a mindfulness-based intervention on mindfulness, stress, salivary alpha-amylase and cortisol in everyday life. C. Aguilar-Raab, M. Stoffel, Cristóbal Hernández, Stefanie Rahn, M. Moessner, and 2 more Psychophysiology , 2021, 43 citations, DOI Full text				Mindfulness-based interventions reduce sympathetic activation (decreased sAA) and to a lesser extent hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal activation (pronounced diurnal decreases in sCort) in daily life *, with mindfulness associated with lower stress and sAA levels. * The study involved 28 intervention participants and 46 controls *, using			

Chat with papers

Edit columns

Answer

Daily mindfulness meditation reduces self-reported stress in adults, but effects on cortisol levels are mixed and context-dependent.

Self-reported stress improvements are consistent: M. Klatt et al., 2009 found significant perceived stress reductions ($p=0.0025$) in 22 participants over 6 weeks, and M. Pascoe et al., 2017's meta-analysis of 45 studies confirmed meditation reduced multiple physiological stress markers including cortisol.

However, cortisol findings are contradictory. K. Sanada et al., 2016's meta-analysis of 5 RCTs (190 participants) found a moderately low effect size ($g=0.41$; $p=0.025$) for cortisol reduction. Yet J. Creswell et al., 2014 found brief 3-day training (66 participants) reduced self-reported stress but *increased* salivary cortisol reactivity to acute stress. W. Turakitwanakan et al., 2013 (30 medical students) showed significant cortisol decreases post-intervention, while M. Galantino et al., 2005 (healthcare professionals) found no significant cortisol changes despite mood improvements.

The discrepancy may reflect differences in intervention duration, measurement timing (resting vs. stress-reactive), and participant populations.

Ask anything about the results

Library / All

All

Recently deleted

Collections



Upload papers to start using Elicit.

Your library is used to store papers and research for analysis and insights.

2

Upload

Connect Zotero



Uploading Articles

Can use Open Access articles:

- PubMed “Free full text” filter
- UofA Library’s Open Access Filter
- Semantic Scholar

Refer to “Copyright Considerations Related to Generative AI”

→ Contact the Copyright Office (copyright@ualberta.ca) for help with specific copyright questions.

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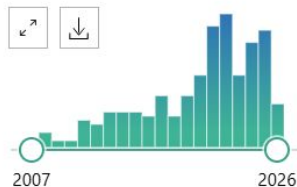
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RESULTS BY YEAR



PUBLICATION DATE

- ☐ 1 year
- ☐ 5 years
- ☐ 10 years
- ☐ Custom Range

TEXT AVAILABILITY

- ☐ Abstract
- ☒ Free full text
- ☐ Full text



204 results



Page

1

of 21



Filters applied: Free full text. [Clear all](#)



1

Effectiveness of **stress** management interventions to change **cortisol** levels: a systematic review and meta-analysis.

Cite

Rogerson O, Wilding S, Prudenzi A, O'Connor DB.

Psychoneuroendocrinology. 2024 Jan;159:106415. doi: 10.1016/j.psyneuen.2023.106415. Epub 2023 Oct 11.

PMID: 37879237 **Free article.**

The studies that utilised **cortisol** awakening measures (g = 0.644) revealed larger effects of **stress** management interventions than those that measured diurnal **cortisol** (g = 0.255). **Mindfulness** and **meditation** (g = 0.345) and relaxation (g = 0.34 ...



2

Brief **mindfulness**-based training and **mindfulness** trait attenuate psychological **stress** in university students: a randomized controlled trial.

Cite

Sousa GM, Lima-Araújo GL, Araújo DB, Sousa MBC.

BMC Psychol. 2021 Feb 1;9(1):21. doi: 10.1186/s40359-021-00520-x.

PMID: 33526085 **Free PMC article.** Clinical Trial.

We analyzed measures of anxiety, affect, **stress**, as well as state and trait **mindfulness** in order to evaluate the effects of trait **mindfulness** and a brief **mindfulness** intervention in forty healthy young students. ...Moderated mediation analysis showed t ...

mindfulness meditation cortisol stress



Everything



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☐ Search in Full Text

Sort by Relevance

Show only

☐ Available Online

☐ Peer-reviewed Articles

☒ Open Access

Date

Resource Type

☐ Journal Articles (365)

☐ Review Articles (55)

☐ Dissertations (10)

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APPLY FILTERS

Including "hydrocortisone". Just search *mindfulness meditation cortisol stress*



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PAGE 1

1-25 of 414 Results



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1



ARTICLE

The Benefits of Mindfulness Meditation on Trait Mindfulness, Perceived Stress, Cortisol, and C-Reactive Protein in Nursing Students: A Randomized Controlled Trial

Alhawatmeh, Hossam N ; Rababa, Mohammad ; Alfaqih, Mahmoud ; Albataineh, Raya ; Hweidi, Issa ; Abu Awwad, Awwad

Advances in medical education and practice, 2022, Vol.13, p.47-58

“ Purpose: Mindfulness meditation was used to reduce stress and its responses such as cortisol and C-reactive protein (CRP)... ”

PEER REVIEWED JOURNAL OPEN ACCESS

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2



BOOK

Handbook of Assessment in Mindfulness Research

Medvedev, Oleg N., editor ; Krägeloh, Christian U., editor ; Siegert, Richard J., editor ; Singh, Nirbhay N., editor.

2025 ; 1st ed. 2025.

Available Online

3



ARTICLE

The Benefits of Mindfulness Meditation on Trait Mindfulness, Perceived Stress, Cortisol, and C-Reactive Protein in Nursing Students: A Randomized Controlled Trial

mindfulness meditation cortisol stress



Everything



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PAGE 1

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Save search



1



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BOOK

Handbook of Assessment in Mindfulness Research

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2025 ; 1st ed. 2025.

Available Online

3



ARTICLE

The Benefits of Mindfulness Meditation on Trait Mindfulness, Perceived Stress, Cortisol, and C-Reactive Protein in Nursing Students: A Randomized Controlled Trial

TOP

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ONLINE ACCESS

DETAILS

MORE INFO

CITATIONS

Cite + Save



Online Access

Full text availability

Publicly Available Content Database

Available from 01/01/2010 volume: 1.



Taylor & Francis Open Access

Available from 12/01/2010 volume: 1.

Open Access



DOAJ Directory of Open Access Journals

Available from 2010.

Open Access



PubMed Central

Available from 2010 volume: 1.

Open Access



Scholars Portal Journals: Open Access

Available from 12/01/2010 volume: 1 until 01/31/2026 volume: 17.

Open Access



Elicit: Limitations

- Limited bibliographic info.
- "Performs routine tasks of literature review (e.g. data extraction) but **not able to perform high-level cognitive functions** that are required to create an understanding and synthesize the literature" (Whitfield and Hofmann, 2023: 204).
- Works less well for identifying facts and in theoretical or non-empirical domains.
- Elicit works best with the prompt: What are the effects of ____ on ____?

Ethical Concerns



“The advent of ‘Deep Research’ agents means we can now summarize 500 papers in 5 minutes. This doesn’t make research easier; it makes it harder. It moves the bottleneck from information gathering to critical evaluation.”

“It means knowing how to construct searches that force the AI to look at the edges of a field, to find the dissenters, and to cite the specific data that doesn’t fit the neat narrative. If you don’t know how to search, you are essentially letting an algorithm decide the boundaries of your world.”

— **Dan Russell, Computer Scientist**

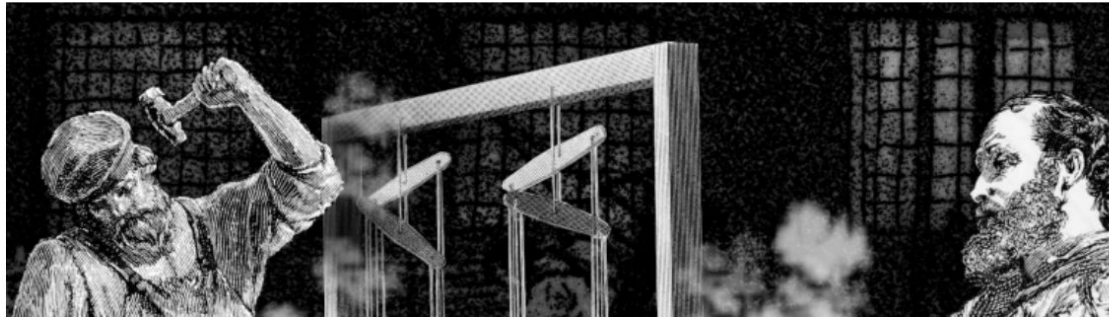
Meet the academics refusing to use generative AI

Researchers say they have their reasons for avoiding AI tools – and they're sick of arguing about it.

By [Hannah Docter-Loeb](#)



Find a new job



Ethical Concerns

- Copyright
- Data privacy/security
- Low wages to humans training AI
- Cognitive offloading (deskilling?)
- Environmental impacts

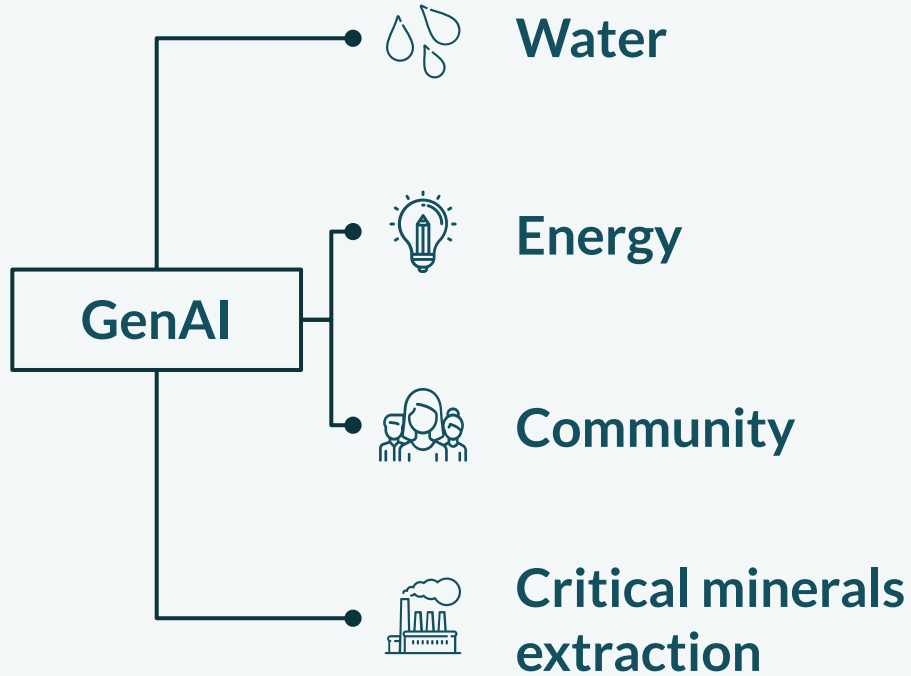
BUSINESS • TECHNOLOGY

Exclusive: OpenAI Used Kenyan Workers on Less Than \$2 Per Hour to Make ChatGPT Less Toxic



Source: Billy Perrigo. (2023). [Exclusive: OpenAI Used Kenyan Workers on Less Than \\$2 Per Hour to Make ChatGPT Less Toxic](#). Time.

Environmental Impacts



Learn more by reading Nicole Hennig's handout:

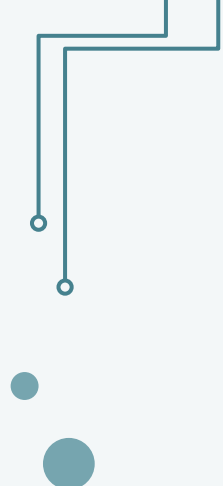
["AI's Environmental Impact: Understanding the Data and Act Sustainably"](#)

Final Thoughts



GenAI tools help us find the needle in the haystack faster, but they don't tell us if the needle is sharp or rusty.

Human-in-the-loop is key!



Thanks!

Comments or Questions?

CREDITS: This presentation template was created by [Slidesgo](#), and includes icons by [Flaticon](#), and infographics & images by [Freepik](#)

