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Alzheimer's –Dementia

Stress Contributing Factor!

Having a well-functioning memory is something we all think about more and more as we age. Memory and other cognitive processes gradually diminish as we grow older, but research in the last several decades shows those who experience persistent or high levels of stress are especially vulnerable.

Although much remains to be learned about the causes of mental decline, it has been well documented recently that **stress is an important contributing factor, including to the development of Alzheimer's disease and other dementia.** A research team in Sweden observed in a recently published 38-year study of 800 women that “psychosocial stressors in midlife were associated with incidence of AD (Alzheimer's disease) and long-standing distress, over several decades.” The study, conducted at the Sahlgrenska Academy at the University of Gothenburg, concluded “this suggests that common psychosocial stressors may have severe and long-standing physiological and psychological consequences.”

## **Effects of Stress on Memory and Cognitive Functions**

The negative effects of stress on memory and other cognitive functions has been widely explored for decades in numerous research projects using a wide range of methodology.

- A study out of the Netherlands published in 2007, *The effects of cortisol increase on long-term memory retrieval during and after acute psychosocial stress*, examined short- and long-term memory.

Call Today!

Learn About Cardiac Heart Coherence

## **Meditate More**

While research to understand, alleviate and cure Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia and cognitive impairment has intensified in the last decade, great strides have been made toward interventions that focus on reducing stress without drugs. Along with the kinds of positive emotion-based techniques Cardiac Coherence HeartMath has been developing since the early 1990s, is a heart focused meditation. **“Meditation has been shown to have positive effects on the brain and can help reverse memory loss as well as help improve psychological and spiritual well-being,** which are both important for healthy brain aging,” explains the [HeartMath Brain Fitness](#)

[Program](#). The book is co-authored by McCraty and Deborah Rozman, Ph.D., president and CEO of HeartMath Inc.

A team of researchers at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center explored whether meditation could prove to be a viable intervention for halting the progression toward dementia in people diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment (MCI). “We wanted to know if stress reduction through meditation might improve cognitive reserve,” said Rebecca Erwin Wells, MD, MPH, who led the team.

Following the trials, the basis of which was a program utilizing meditation and mindfulness – nonjudgmental awareness in each moment – the researchers observed positive results in adult participants with mild cognitive impairment. “These preliminary results indicate that in adults with MCI, MBSR (mindfulness-based stress reduction) may have a positive impact on the regions of the brain most related to MCI and AD (Alzheimer’s disease,” they stated in the study’s abstract.