



# Mindfulness Meditation and Child Birth

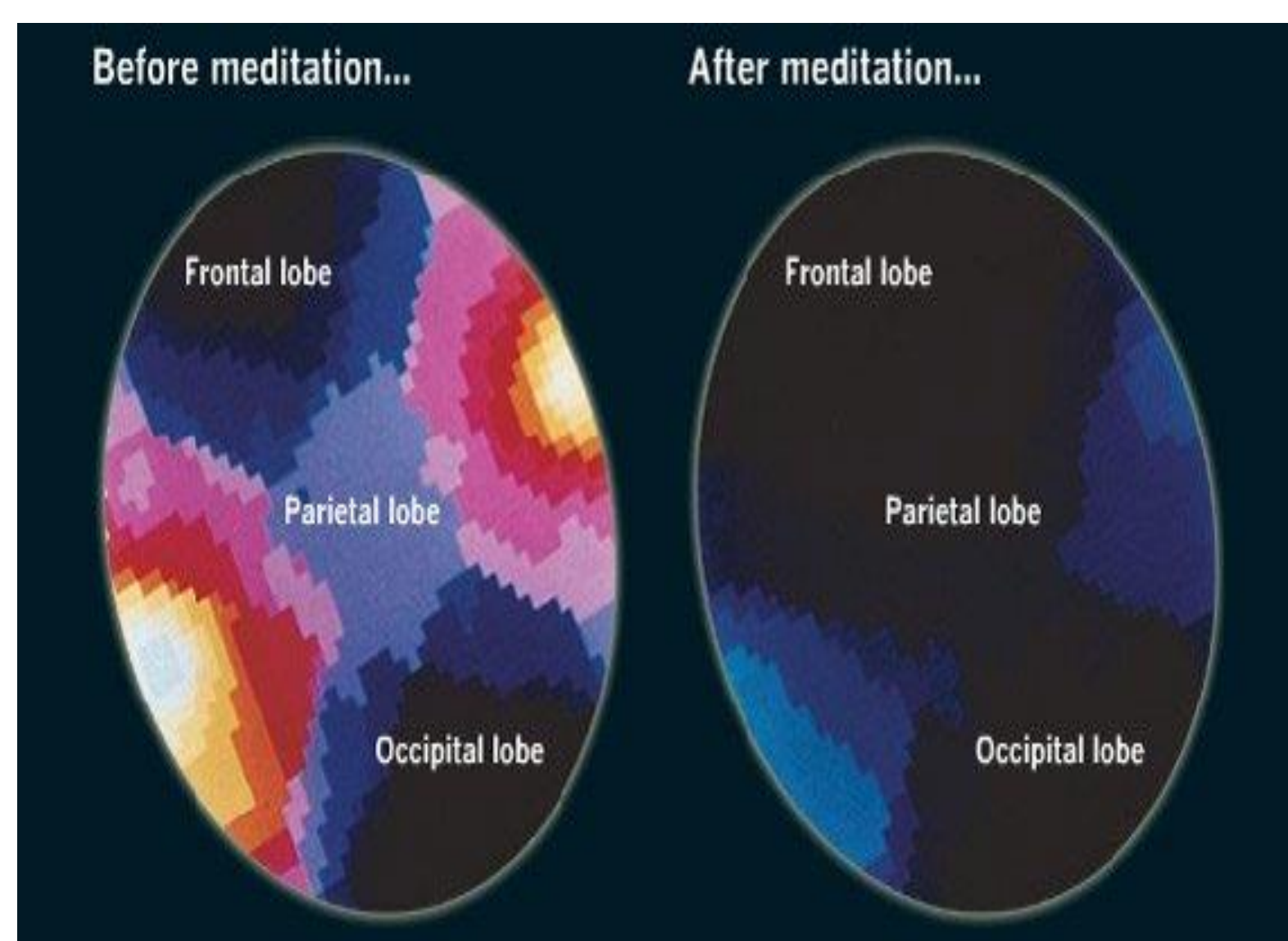
Brianna Garcia

Donna Oropall

Department of Human Services  
University of Bridgeport, CT

## Abstract

The practice of mindfulness meditation offers a variety of benefits. These benefits include stress and anxiety reduction, overwhelmed feelings, irritability, worry, and chronic pain. There have been many studies that support this practice and confirm this to be true. Dr. Adrienne Brown a clinical psychologist also confirms the benefits mindfulness meditation has on childbirth. Mindfulness is an insight into habitual thinking, and power to alleviate stress and suffering. There are numerous mindfulness techniques people use. During childbirth one of these techniques include Lamaze breathing. This is a natural labor and childbirth method that focuses on breathing and relaxation. The focus of mindfulness meditation and child labor is to limit stress, anxiety, fear, and labor pain during the birthing process.



Pain is perceived as an incoming stimulus. The image shows how meditation impacts the brains perception of pain.

## Main Arguments

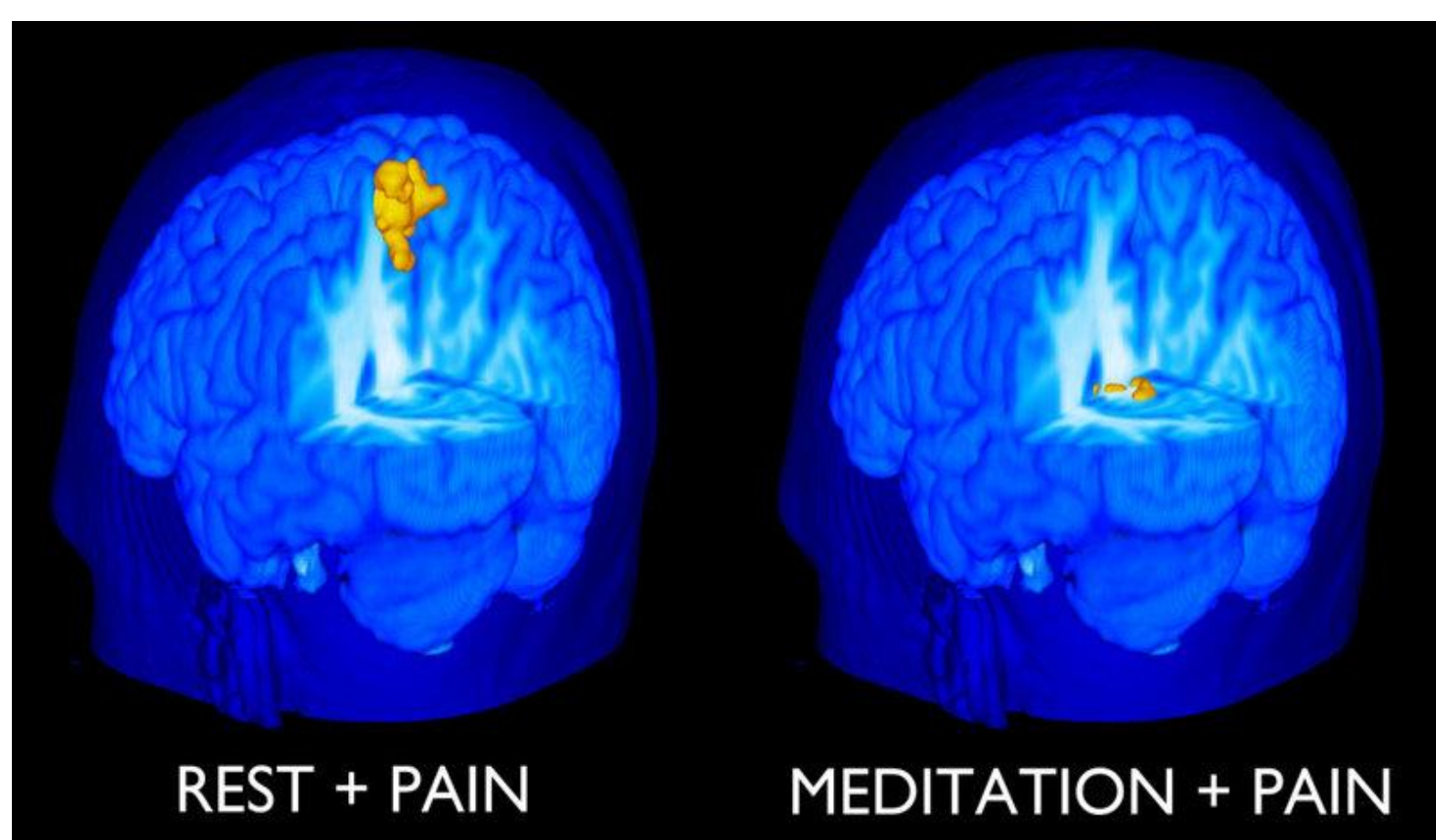
- The potential benefits of mindfulness and pain are supported by research showing that mindfulness is helpful for people with chronic pain. Pain caused by childbirth presents similar challenges. Although women can get an epidural depending on the women the epidural might only provide spotty pain relief (“BabyCenter”,2016).
- A pilot study done by Baradacke a nurse midwife from California in 2006 showed that pregnant women who practiced mindfulness and yoga reported less physical pain during childbirth and pregnancy (Raguso, 2008).
- Practicing mindfulness meditation allows an individual focus on the present and the now of pregnancy and delivery. In pregnant women, high levels of cortisol have been associated with many health complications that include low birth weight among babies and they tend to have difficulty breathing at birth (Raguso 2008). Mindfulness meditation helps ease pain as well as fear.
- To manage stress the amygdala must be relaxed but when stress arises a person’s amygdala goes into fight or flight mode. Mindfulness meditation techniques are extremely helpful in relaxing the amygdala by activating the prefrontal cortex. The prefrontal cortex acts as an aid to calm the amygdala down (Greenberg, n.d.). This can be a reminder for a stressful mother giving birth to remember to calm down, focus on her breathing and come out of autopilot.
- Lamaze is a mindfulness childbirth technique that involves exercises and breathing control to provide pain relief without drugs. Conscious and slow breathing can reduce heart rate, anxiety, and pain perception. Lamaze and mindfulness meditation correlates because if an individual is focused on their breathing other sensations such as labor pains move to the back of a women’s mind who is giving birth (“Lamaze Breathing,” n.d.).

## Conclusion

Mindfulness meditation has been shown to change the way people think. Brain scans show that mindfulness can relax the brain patterns when pain arises and over time can alter the structure of the brain so that people no longer feel pain the same. Mindfulness teaches a person how to control the way they process their pain. These learned techniques are very helpful in relaxing the amygdala by activating the prefrontal cortex which acts as an aid to calm the amygdala down (Greenberg). As a person learns how to perform mindfulness meditation any anxiety and stress disappear too. Mindfulness can create a calm state of mind and your body can then relax and heal (Penman, 2015).

## References

- Brown, D. A. (2017, July 03). 5 ways mindfulness can help you have a gentler birth. Retrieved March 04, 2018, from <http://www.kidspot.com.au/birth/labour/preparing-for-labour/5-ways-mindfulness-can-help-you-have-a-gentler-birth/news-story/414fc3f6c308c88686a5d021471cff7d>
- Duncan, L. G., Cohn, M. A., Chao, M. T., Cook, J. G., Riccobono, J., & Bardacke, N. (2017). Retrieved March 04, 2018, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5427564/>
- Four Reasons to Practice Mindfulness During Pregnancy. (n.d.). Retrieved March 04, 2018, from [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/four\\_reasons\\_to\\_practice\\_mindfulness\\_during\\_pregnancy](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/four_reasons_to_practice_mindfulness_during_pregnancy)
- Fraga, J. (2017, May 31). The Benefits of a Mindful Pregnancy. Retrieved March 04, 2018, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/31/well/family/the-benefits-of-a-mindful-pregnancy.html>
- Hughes, A., Williams, M., Bardacke, N., Duncan, L. G., Dimidjian, S., & Goodman, S. H. (2009, October 01). Retrieved March 04, 2018, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3846392/>
- Mindfulness-focused childbirth education leads to less depression. (2017, May 24). Retrieved March 04, 2018, from <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/05/170524131122.htm>
- Penman, D. (2015, January 09). Can Mindfulness Meditation Really Reduce Pain and Suffering? Retrieved March 04, 2018, from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/mindfulness-in-frantic-world/201501/can-mindfulness-meditation-really-reduce-pain-and-suffering>
- Lazar, Sarah. “How Meditation Changes the Brain.” *The Renegade Pharmacist*, 5 May 2017, [therenegadepharmacist.com/how-meditation-changes-the-brain/](http://therenegadepharmacist.com/how-meditation-changes-the-brain/)
- The Mindful Birth. (n.d.). Retrieved March 04, 2018, from [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/mindful\\_birth](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/mindful_birth)



Meditation has shown to be more effective at alleviating than bedrest.