

## [Psychology Today](#)

# A Tale of Two Grandmothers: Meditation Keeps Us Healthy

## How Meditation Reduces Medical Costs

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/meditation-modern-life/201109/tale-two-grandmothers-meditation-keeps-us-healthy>

by [Dr. Robert Puff, Ph.D.](#)

Published on September 28, 2011



If you've read Robert Kiyosaki's *New York Times* Bestseller, *Rich Dad, Poor Dad*, you'll recall that it's a story about two fathers: The "poor" one was the main character's biological dad, and the "rich" one was his financial mentor, who wasn't related to him at all. I have my own take on this story: *Physically Fit Grandma, Mentally Fit Grandma*. In this blog post, I'll use their examples to illustrate the impact of meditation of our overall health.

### Profiles of Health

Growing up I was very close to both of my grandmothers. Although both lived to be 90 years old, their lives ended in dramatically different ways. Physically Fit Grandma exercised and walked regularly. In fact, to stay active during the frozen mid-western winters, she'd stroll in circles in her basement. Meanwhile, Mentally Fit Grandma loved to play cards and other intellectually stimulating games, and her mind remained alert until the day she died. Each benefitted from the focus they placed on their lives and suffered from what they neglected. Physically Fit Grandma was diagnosed with Alzheimer's later in life.

In terms of overall healthcare costs, which grandmother was a greater burden on our system? Mentally Fit Grandma and those like her end up consuming the most medical dollars. For example, in this country, the top 10% of people who visit the doctor account for 60% to 70% of all medical expenses in the U.S.

For senior citizens, the top 25% who visit the doctor account for about 85% of all medical expenses. This means that when people are sick, their medical expenses are much, much higher

than the rest of us, and the government and health care industry absorb much of these costs; this principal applies to countries around the world.

### **Meditation to the Rescue**

A study by Dr. Robert Hurrion of Quebec Canada, which appeared in the *American Journal of Health Promotion* (Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 56-60), showed how meditation could cut medical costs by as much as 28%. The meditation subjects, and after five years, had their medical costs reduced by 28%. The study's participants practiced Transcendental Meditation, or TM, which is one of the oldest forms in the United States; its long history in our country has resulted in over 350 academic studies.

### **What Did the Research Involve?**

Dr. Herron's 284 subjects were all considered "high cost patients," and they were segregated into two groups. Group one learned TM techniques, while the second served as a control, which meant that they weren't taught any meditation practice.

After year one, the TM group experienced an 11% reduction in medical costs. After five years, their expenses went down by 28%. Can you imagine cutting your medical costs by 28% without having to spend a penny? The wider implications on the entire healthcare industry are significant because as you know, the costs of the most expensive patients are often spread across the entire system.

### **Meditation Is One Way to Decrease Government Debt**

Nation-wide austerity measures. Government bailouts. Countries on the brink of defaulting. The economic crises erupting around the globe are causing countries to do a line-by-line analysis of their budgets. And one of the biggest expenses that will continue to grow is healthcare. Imagine if the healthcare industry incentivized meditation. More of us would meditate, and as Dr. Hurrion's study shows, costs would decrease, which would free up money to tackle other matters of fiscal importance.

### **Meditate Locally, Act Globally.**

If you want to improve your health, it's time to begin a regular meditative practice. Once you experience the mind-body benefits, you should encourage those around you to start as well. Once you've convinced those closest to you, contact your local leaders like Senators and congress people. Ask them to support community-based meditation practice. If you're a person of faith, consider telling your pastors, priests, rabbis, and imams how meditation will benefit congregants and enhance their spiritual development too. Show your doctor, hardwired to trust science, studies like Dr. Hurrion's, which may encourage him or her to prescribe the practice to patients. Science has just begun to unravel the mysteries of meditation's benefits. Based on what has been published so far, it's a practice that can literally change the world.