

Meditation- "the art of self-actualization"

If you have an interest in quiet revolutions, then you should be aware of one which is rapidly taking place throughout the world right now. I refer to Transcendental Meditation, developed by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, which is spreading across cities, college campuses and small towns in North America at the rate of some 40,000 new meditators per month. Why this tremendous interest? What is TM and what can it do for me as a student in particular?

Firstly, it should be understood that the TM technique is not a religion, a cult, a set of beliefs, or a particular kind of life style. It is merely a simple mental technique which Maharishi defines as "turning the attention inwards so that the mind experiences progressively finer and finer levels of thought until the mind transcends the finest thought and experiences its origin in pure consciousness."

Thus, the mind, through this repeated experience of the full range of its potential, is naturally expanded and more of our mental potential made available to us. There is no mysticism involved; it is strictly a scientific technique. It does not involve any strenuous mental gymnastics either; nor are there any attempts at mood-making or self-hypnosis. It is natural and spontaneous. No efforts of concentrating or contemplating are used.

Despite the simplicity of the TM technique, research substantiates that some profound physiological changes occur in meditators. Dr. Keith Wallace and Dr. Herbert Benson, pioneers in this area found that during TM the body receives profound rest - even deeper in some respects than a full night's sleep can give. The whole metabolic rate is slowed down. Oxygen consumption decreases, heart beat slows down, cardiac output (the workload of the heart) is reduced, skin resistance, (an indicator of relaxation) goes up sharply and alpha waves from the brain, change and become more purified in frequency and amplitude. This latter phenomenon has been more extensively investigated by Dr. Jean-Paul Banquet, the famous French EEG researcher, who observed periods of "hypersynchrony" during TM, indicating the electrical patterns from all parts of the brain were "in phase" with each other at points in the meditation. Banquet concluded that these patterns were unique and indicative of a fourth major state of human consciousness apart from waking, sleeping and dreaming.

It also seems to be the case that the physiological synchrony of the brain indicates an increasing coordination between the separate *functions* of the brain hemispheres as well. For example, the psychologist Robert Ornstein argues that the two major brain hemispheres are associated with different major modes of thinking, the left side being concerned with logical, mathematical or analytical reasoning while the right with more intuitive, spatial, creative or synthetic thinking. Physiological hypersynchrony as observed during TM could also mean the psychological enhancement of these two modes of thinking for those who practice the

TM technique. This would imply that say, IQ, both verbal and non-verbal, mathematical ability and logical reasoning should improve in meditators at the same time that creativity increases. Several studies now completed in Canada, Hawaii, the United States and Holland indicate just that.

It has also been shown in several studies that personality characteristics of practising meditators change in a direction of "self-actualization", i.e., in a direction of bringing out inner potential in a healthy manner. An important result of this is a strengthening of self-concept. Self-concept is, very simply, the way we perceive ourselves and is an important factor which operates in all our activities and relationships. Indeed, some researchers feel that a healthy self-image is as important to school grades as is IQ. Since both mental ability and self-concept have been shown to improve with regular practise of TM, it is small wonder that several studies have shown grade point averages to rise in meditating students. Furthermore, several basic mental abilities, such as memory and ability to integrate and organize material in a meaningful way appear to be improved as well.

Thus the TM technique has an important contribution to make to student life in terms of enjoyment and success in one's academic career. This has already been recognized in over 200 universities and 50 secondary schools where TM and its theoretical aspect, called the Science of Creative Intelligence (SCI) are taught for credit.

Another important benefit from regular practise of TM is improved health. The deep rest of TM provides the body with a natural means of repairing deep-rooted stress in the nervous system. This allows the nervous system to become more stable and allows the development

of stability, flexibility and adaptability. Several studies have shown that TM is valuable for hypertension, high blood pressure, bronchial asthma, weight-reduction, insomnia and in helping the individual reduce consumption of cigarettes and alcohol which in turn are known to affect health profoundly. Both physical and mental health are improved for the better with regular TM.

These physiological and psychological benefits may account for the improved interpersonal benefits experienced and studied in meditators who often report that family and friendship bonds are strengthened and that relations with peers or co-workers improves.

Now imagine this situation: You're a salesman coming to see the boss on a Monday morning after having missed an important appointment with him on the previous Friday. How you handle this situation, determined largely by how you *feel*, will have an impact on your relationship with the boss, perhaps even your job. How do you handle it?

This is not an imaginary case but described to me by a meditator who found himself in just this position (he had been meditating only a week). The situation was resolved as follows: The boss was in a terrible mood. The salesman walked into the office and was in a very good mood. They exchanged the usual opening remarks including "How are you today?" The boss replied and it was obvious that he "felt terrible." To which the meditator responded: "Gee, that's realy too bad because I feel great!" The boss' mood changed instantly and everything took a positive turn from there.

This situation, besides illustrating something of interpersonal dynamics also illustrates that the individual has a profound influence on his environment. If he is tense, irritable, tired, then it is virtually impossible not to display

this in social situations. And the opposite also appears true. If the individual is calm, rested, fresh and friendly, he can have a major impact with those he comes into contact. Just this observation has led to the speculation that a few calm meditators - perhaps as few as one in one hundred of 1% of any organization or society can have a major influence on the degree of calmness or orderliness in the society as a whole and that this might be reflected in say, decreasing crime rates in a city, state or country. The beginnings of this kind of research have already been made. In a comparison of 12 "1% cities" in the United States (those cities over 50,000 population which have had 1% or more instructed in TM) with 12 non-meditating cities, it was found that whereas crime rates *rose* an average of 10% in the non-meditating cities (consistent with national trends), the crime rate *fell* in every "1% city" without exception and the average decline was 10%. The study is now being extended to over 370 cities around the world which have 1% or more meditating and not just crime rates but over 70 variables are being observed which might be affected by increasing orderliness, and creativity and decreasing tension in an area due to significant numbers in the area practising TM.

Thus, one simple technique affects the individual in a variety of ways, improving inner mental potential, health and social and personal relationships.

The TM technique is taught by qualified teachers year-round in Edmonton. Two of them, Cheryl Wilson and Ric Johnson, give daily noon lectures for U of A students in SUB - Room 104. Drop in for more information.

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Takin' care of business

by Bill Weir

If its first year success is any indication, The Alberta Student Consultant (ASC) will be around for many summers to come. Offering valuable experience to University of Alberta business students, as well as helpful consultation to small Alberta based businesses - the main objectives of the ASC summer program are:

1) To provide low cost assistance to small Alberta based business.

2) To foster cooperation and liaison between small business, the University of Alberta, and the Provincial government.

3) To provide business students, recent graduates as well as students at the undergraduate level, with meaningful summer employment.

4) To provide a continuous service for the advancement of students and the business community through their interaction.

5) To establish and maintain a library documenting the cases, reports, recommendations, and outcomes of the student projects.

Despite skeptical feelings on the part of many members of both faculty and students within the university, these objectives were carried out with great success this summer. The program as a whole was highly approved by the majority of businesses that requested ASC assistance.

Many problems faced the program in its early stages. After having secured funding under the Department of Recreation, Parks and Wildlife, ASC had to let Alberta's small businessmen know of its services. A vigorous promotional campaign was employed, using the radio, television and newspaper medias.

The promotional efforts proved to be positive, resulting in many inquiries from local businessmen and the program was underway.

Perhaps the greatest value of ASC lies in the cost to the client. As the program is externally financed, the sole charge which the business incurs is a nominal administrative fee. In the case of firms being unable to afford this nominal charge, the fee will be immediately waived. Therefore, the program

imposes no financial burden upon the firm which applies for ASC's services.

Dale Janssen, a University of Alberta commerce student, and ASC's program coordinator is one who would very much like to see a continuation of the program's success story next summer. Presently he is engaged in seeking financial backing from the government with hopes of receiving an increased budget so the program can be expanded to include the rural areas of the province as well as the urban centres.

The existence of ASC presently rests in the hands of the Provincial government. Dale Janssen and other ASC involved students are very hopeful that the program will get the go ahead signal for its second year. A program that involves so many people, student and business community alike, should be an important consideration in receiving the funding. For a government that is attempting to promote business development in Alberta, ASC could and should be a very important means to reach this end.