

Going into the 80s with:

TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION

By NEIL DICKIE

"I have no doubt whatsoever that most people live, whether physically, intellectually or morally in a very restricted circle of their potential being. They make use of a very small portion of their possible consciousness. Much like a man who out of his whole bodily organism should get into the habit of using and moving only his little finger."

William James

Professor James, regarded as the father of Western psychology, made this statement around the turn of the century. Since then it has been echoed by many of the leading thinkers of our time, among them Fritz Perls, the founder of the Gestalt therapy, and Dr. Wilder Penfield, the world renowned Canadian pioneer in neuro-physiology. Probably the most important scientist of the century, Albert Einstein, once estimated that he used just 20-25 per cent of his mental capacity.

The need for a means to unfold human potential has never been more important than in this decade in which the routine demands made upon the individual - physical, intellectual, emotional and ethical - are more than at any point in the world's history.

It has been estimated that knowledge is expanding so rapidly that by the time a child born today graduates from college the amount of knowledge in the world will be four times as great. The mass media daily presents us with a barrage of ideas, images and information to be sorted and absorbed. Modern transportation systems have made our's an almost nomadic society - we move often to take new jobs and attend new schools, breaking direct ties with the support of family and friends. The pace of life in general has increased manifold and the consequences of this are apparent in the health statistics of modern countries.

We are quickly coming to the point where we must decide whether to reduce the rate of progress or to maximize our abilities to deal with, and further, to control the changes which the explosion of knowledge and technology is facing us with.

THE TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION PROGRAM

Probably the best known, and certainly the most thoroughly researched means for the systematic development of human potential is the TM program. Since the first major study on the physiology of the TM technique was published in *Science* in 1971, over 300 studies on TM in the areas of physiology, psychology and of late sociology, have been completed. Dozens of these have been published in well-known and respected professional publications such as *Scientific American*, *Psychosomatic Medicine* and *Perceptual and Motor Skills*. The evidence that something very real and beneficial happens during and after TM practice is so substantial as to be very difficult to ignore.

Support for the TM program comes from an amazing variety of people from all areas of society. Foremost among TM supporters have been those who most often have to deal with people suffering from problems associated with the stress of life - doctors. Dr. EB Toane, writing in *The Canadian Medical Association Journal* in June 1976 recommends TM as a preventive measure against stress and says that about 65 doctors in Alberta practice the technique, including himself. And in Britain just last year a group of over 100 physicians who both practice and recommend the technique petitioned the British government to finance the prescription of TM under the National Health Service.

Another supporter is Dennis Potvin of the New York Islanders who, when asked in a television during the 1977 playoffs how his team coped with the pressure of Stanley Cup hockey, had high praise for TM. All but 2 members of the team had started in mid-season. Probably the interest that has been shown in sports circles started when Joe Namath of the New York Jets football team began the practice, and told a television interviewer simply: "The thing I appreciate about the TM program is the deep rest. I need it. I look forward to it."

Praise for the benefits, psychological and physical, have come from some of the highest areas of established society - whose members have been allayed of reservations caused by the esoteric sounding name of the technique by the solidness of the scientific research behind it. Philip S. Dunlap, chairman of the board of the State University of New Hampshire after investigating the technique's benefits went on record with the statement: "I would like to urge all educators, government leaders and journalists in New Hampshire to investigate TM and give serious consideration to its introduction into the educational system of the state on a formal basis." Major General Franklin M. Davis, who started the technique while principal of the US Army War College - the graduate school of Westpoint - said "My blood pressure went down ten points. My wife said my disposition improved and minor stresses and strains of life around Washington didn't bother me any more."

And then too, from the very different world of pop music we have Stevie Wonder singing on a recent album, *Innervisions*: "Transcendental Meditation gives you peace of mind" and the Beach Boys, who were among the original group of TM practitioners, had "The TM Song" well up in the charts last year. TM is truly a technique for all people.

In Canada, about 160,000 people have taken the seven step, 10 hour course of instruction, which makes it second in the world in terms of number of people per capita practicing the technique. Israel is first, Norway is on a par with Canada, Sweden is third and the United States fourth. Altogether, about 1.7 million people practice TM with teaching centres established in over 80 countries, including Poland and Yugoslavia.

In Fredericton, the technique has been taught on a regular basis since 1969. The Fredericton TM centre was started by UNB law student Bill Watts who took a year off law school to go to India and take the teacher training program. He has since moved to Ottawa to practice law, but the centre has been kept up by other qualified TM teachers who make their home in the city (see box below). Since 1969 about 600 people, about half of them UNB students and faculty, have learned the technique.

PRACTICING TM - A FEW BASIC POINTS

TM is very simple, natural and easy to learn and practice. It is quite unique among meditation techniques because it doesn't involve any strenuous effort, concentration or contemplation. In fact, a person doesn't have to imagine or aim at any process at all. Once taught, the TM technique practically does itself, because it involves the use of an ability which is naturally inherent in the human nervous system.

During practice of the TM technique the mind effortlessly settles down to a state of calm inner awareness and the body settles into a state measurably deeper than deep sleep. A person gains a unique state of consciousness called "restful alertness" which is distinctly different from waking, sleeping or dreaming. This state cannot be achieved through hypnosis, catnapping, relaxing, relaxation exercises, bio-feedback techniques or other known techniques which might go by the name of meditation, as has been shown by numerous scientific comparative studies.

The strongest competitor with the TM program in recent years has been a technique based on TM devised by a Harvard cardiologist named Herbert Benson. Dr. Benson claims that his technique (which he details in his best selling book; "The Relaxation Response") produces effects comparable to that of the TM technique. Several independent studies carried out in the four years since publication of the book have not borne out this claim. TM is not a religion or a philosophy or a lifestyle; although it has relevance to all of these. It does not involve a change in diet or dress. No change in personal habits is required or even mentioned in the course. However, most people find that after a couple of weeks or months of regular practice they feel less inclined to do things which take away from good health, and an increased clarity of mind resulting from TM practice.

TM is not time consuming - it only takes 20 minutes twice a day, and doesn't involve difficult postures: its practiced sitting comfortably - usually in a chair - with eyes closed.

The immediate result of TM is increased mental clarity and more physical energy. It is emphasized that the improved condition of the mind results in large part from an improving condition of the body and nervous system caused from the regular experience of the deeper-than-sleep rest of TM. Therefore, it is a gradual process of growth. The cumulative effects have been shown to include increased creativity and intelligence, better health and mind-body co-ordination and increased personality integration.

THE TM PROGRAM AND ENLIGHTENMENT

The goal of the regular practice of TM is the state of enlightenment, and by that nothing mystical is meant. "Enlightenment" is a classical term which refers to the state of full development of human potential. It involves the embodiment of those qualities of human nature that we already hold high: creativity, stability, sensitivity, kindness. Enlightenment, as leading TM researcher Dr. R.K. Wallace said at the 26th International Conference of Physiological Sciences in 1974, "depends on the perfect and harmonious functioning of every part of the nervous system". "It is something real, natural and tangible and develops systematically in a continuous and progressive manner on the basis of neuro-physiological refinement or purification."

A modern synonym for enlightenment is "self-actualization" a term originated by Humanistic Psychology.

During practice of the TM technique mental activity settles, much as in the absence of wind, the waves on the surface of an ocean settle. With this settling down of the mind, thinking becomes more refined and more orderly. Eventually the most quiet, refined level of thinking is experienced. At this point one actually goes beyond the thinking process and experiences its source - which is perfectly orderly and a tremendous reservoir of creative intelligence.

This regular and systematic experience of more refined and thinking naturally enlivens those areas of the brain concerned with more refined thinking, making them more available for conscious use.

This is what is meant by "expansion of consciousness" a general increase in ability to command the natural resources of the mind, making more effective thought and action possible.

One of the great laws governing the physical world is the third law of thermodynamics, a law which teaches the direction of orderliness in physical systems. It says that as temperature goes down, so does activity and 'entropy' or disorder.

We see examples of this law everyday at this time of year. If we take a walk outside on some winter days we might see on our sleeve tiny white hexagonal crystals which are highly orderly in their structure, yet each one unique and extremely beautiful. This order is simply caused by the quiet that takes place in a water droplet exposed to the cold of the atmosphere - the quiet and stillness caused by the drop in temperature allows the natural orderliness of the water molecule to manifest itself - resulting in this display of natural beauty.

Similarly, as one practices the TM technique, mental "temperature" decreases as the mind settles down, and with this increasing trend of quiet in the nervous system, more and more of its inherent orderliness is expressed. This is a definite experience during and after practice of Transcendental Meditation, and shows up in a measurement of increased electrical coherence between all areas of the brain. Interestingly, it is not the famous 'alpha' waves, practically made a household word by widespread use of bio-feedback technology - that is most characteristic of the neuro-physiology of TM, but rather the general pattern of a remarkable degree of orderliness and harmony - which increases as the technique is practiced over the years.



WHO IS MAHARISHI MAHESH YOGI?

The exotic looking founder of the TM program is one of the few signs of the cultural origins of TM - India. Maharishi insists, however, that because TM is completely scientific it is no more appropriate to call it an 'Indian' meditation than it is to call the laws of relativity 'German', because Einstein happened to be born in Germany.

Maharishi began teaching the technique in the west in 1959. In the late sixties he began teacher training courses in India and later in Europe, realizing that he could never on his own teach enough people to make a significant contribution to the alleviation of suffering in the world. Over 10,000 people have become qualified TM teachers in intensive, comprehensive courses which he personally teaches and supervises. This has made possible the effective teaching of the technique to millions of people.

In addition to this main achievement, Maharishi is well known in the world intellectual community for his synthesis of ancient Vedic knowledge and modern scientific method called 'Science of Creative Intelligence', which is now taught for credit at many universities in North America and Europe, including Stanford, Yale and UCLA. In Canada, the course is offered for credit at York University and the University of Quebec. The Fredericton TM Centre offers the course to TM practitioners on an annual basis.

As a young man, while studying physics at Allahbad University, he met his master, Swami Brahmananda Saraswati, a man revered by his generation of experts in Indian philosophy and meditation practice in Northern India. After completing his degree at his master's request, Maharishi studied 13 years with him and under his inspiration probed and rediscovered the correct use of the ancient vedic principles of meditation, which had been lost or distorted with the long passage of time.

Maharishi insists that the TM technique is not a revolutionary approach to meditation, rather, it is a revival of the technology of meditation in its pure, effective form.

In recent years he has perfected a group of techniques, based on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, called the "TM-Sidhi" Program. They are supplementary to TM practice. He has also been active in encouraging comparative study of the ancient Vedas of India - the basic source of TM - and quantum physics. He regularly hosts symposiums on this and related subjects, which attract many leading figures in an international scientific community.