

# Could Transcendental Meditation help?

Stress and fear is part of everyone's lives, but sometimes situations arise that can tip people over the edge. One well-documented stressful situation for people is visiting the dentist, and dentists themselves are increasingly finding that work and life are becoming harder to cope with. There are solutions, ranging from counselling and medication, to holistic treatments and meditation. One dentist has used Transcendental Meditation as a way of calming both himself and his patients for years. In the first part of a two-part series, PATRICE GLADWIN finds out more...

**H**OW many people love their dentist? Don't answer! My daughter wouldn't let us buy a house on the same street as the surgery. But Kevin Esplin is a dentist people love. He puts his calm and jolly manner down to Transcendental Meditation. And, that's not all. He regularly recommends the TM technique to patients.

"If their lives are stressful," says Kevin, "then a visit to the dentist can be the last straw. Or else the dam bursts when the chair rises. If I'm faced with a client under stress, I just can't help saying 'You'd love TM'. Besides, tight jaws and night-time grinding of the teeth could become things of the past for patients who take up TM. It really works; people find an inner stability they didn't think

possible, get increased energy and do more with their lives."

Kevin's story was a challenge to a sceptic, so I began in the pretty village of Saffron Walden. Here's one of his clients, Sue Cates:

*"That trip to the dentist was bizarre. My sister was dying; she had cancer and I was going to inherit her daughter. I went to the dentist and he said: 'How are you?'"*

*I said: 'I'm fine.' And I got into the chair and I thought: that is a silly thing to say because I'm not at all fine! So I said: 'Actually I'm not fine; my sister is dying and my husband has a serious illness; my mother is having heart surgery... and life is fairly chaotic.'"*

*I thought he'd say: 'I'm sorry to hear that; open your mouth.' But he didn't. He said: 'That's a lot of*

*stress you're carrying. What are you doing about it?'"*

*I thought, this is the most bizarre conversation I've ever had in a dentist's room. I replied: 'I'm not doing anything!' I was cross because I thought he was implying I should go and get some antidepressants or something.*

*Then I softened: 'What do you think I should do?' He said: 'Well, you could learn to meditate.' I thought, this is very bizarre now. So I asked: 'What are you talking about?' And he said: 'You should learn TM.'"*

*I asked him what TM was, and he replied: 'It's Transcendental Meditation; it's the only form of meditation that's been clinically researched. These are the benefits...', and then he reeled off lots of benefits which I didn't take on board at the time.*

*He said: 'I've been practising it for years...how old do you think I am?' I said: 'I guess you're about thirty-three.' And he said: 'No; I'm a lot older than that. One of the things about TM is that you don't age so quickly.'"*

*Well, a big thanks to Kevin and to TM. Yes, stressful situations... obviously, they still come...but meditation, in a rough sea, is very much an anchoring point. Each day it just holds you when things are really traumatic. You don't need to rush off to the doctor for something to help you through when you do the TM regularly. You find that strength inside yourself. And the other thing which I think is extraordinary: you begin to get a sense that everything is interconnected. You feel that we are all one. When you meditate you get an experience of peace which is very beautiful. This is what draws you*

*back again and again; you may not get it every time but that doesn't matter. And it's a physical as well as a spiritual sense. I've noticed lately that people say to me: 'You're so calm. What do you do?' And I say: 'I meditate.' 'But,' they say, 'isn't that awfully boring?' And I reply: 'No; I can't imagine living without it. It's essential to living...for me...for my life.'"*

*I think the shifts it produces in your awareness and your mind are profound; but they're very, very subtle. Nothing dramatic happens; it's gradual and it's subtle. Then you look back at yourself from five years ago and you seem to have a more refined sense of everything. This is hard to put into words: it's subtle, incremental. You don't notice that you're changing or that your perceptions of life are changing... until something crops up which makes you compare how you would have reacted before with how you're reacting now. It's extraordinary: the resilience, the stability, the clarity.*

*The other thing that I've found amazing is that I used to get minor ailments. Thank God I've never been seriously ill but I was always someone who got 'flu a couple of times in the winter and usually had a heavy cold at least once. Then there was the odd bad headache and so on. And all that, strangely, has stopped. In ten years I've only had 'flu once. But that again is something you don't notice until you look back and think: 'Good heavens, I haven't had 'flu for years; how strange!'"*

*One thing I found it hugely helpful with was study. I did a Cambridge degree when I was in*

*my fifties. That was probably the most stressful thing I've ever done in my life because it wasn't just the degree: as a mother I had a lot of other things going on in the background that I had to cope with. So I had a lot on my plate. And I don't think I would have survived ... well, I'm jolly sure I wouldn't have survived ... if I hadn't been a TMer.*

*It has kept me going in the darkest hours: that energy lift and the wonderful clarity of mind. It's always available, that sense of stepping out of the stress into an area of tranquillity and bliss and transcendence. It is essential. And on a day-to-day level I do get more done because I meditate.*

*"We live in East Anglia and we were going to a wedding in Cornwall and it actually took us nine hours; it was exhausting. We stopped at a motor-way café and I said to my husband: 'I'm so tired; we need to meditate.'"*

*So we just sat and meditated for ten minutes. It was amazing: we felt so alert! We didn't even need a Kit-Kat or a cup of tea. We were completely revitalised and continued on our way. It's the most wonderful resource on that practical level."*

I was charmed by Sue, but could do with an objective point of view. In the next issue of *The Probe* read about my visit to Dr Michael Musgrave, a practising GP in North London. □

● Look out for the second part in the next issue of *The Probe*! For more information about Transcendental Meditation, or for details of one of the 60 TM teaching centres in the United Kingdom, contact 08705-143733.



● Kevin Esplin recommends TM to patients: "If their lives are stressful, then a visit to the dentist can be the last straw. If I'm faced with a client under stress, I just can't help saying 'You'd love TM'. It works, people find an inner stability they didn't think possible, get increased energy and do more with their lives."

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