

# Maharishi Foundation

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Press release

## **Is Meditation the New Medication for Stressed University Students?**

**New brain study at American University shows promising results  
Research published in the 24 February issue of the peer-reviewed  
*International Journal of Psychophysiology\**, suggests that the  
simple mental technique of Transcendental Meditation, founded by  
Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, may be a solution to common problems  
amongst students.**

Escalating demands of college life put tremendous stresses on students, who frequently abuse drugs and alcohol to self-medicate and boost academic performance. A survey conducted in 2008\*\* by the universities of Leeds, Sheffield, and York, concludes that "high levels of [alcohol] consumption in a large population of students suggests the need for effective preventative and treatment interventions for all year groups."

The new randomised controlled trial in the USA to be published this month suggests Transcendental Meditation is a possible solution. The study was a collaboration between the American University Department of Psychology in Washington, D.C., and the Center for Brain, Consciousness, and Cognition at Maharishi University of Management in Fairfield, Iowa. It is the first random assignment study of the effects of meditation practice on brain and physiological functioning in university students.

The study found that students who practised Transcendental Meditation for ten weeks habituated quicker to a stressful stimulus (indicative of greater emotional stability), reported less sleepiness, and measured higher on a Brain Integration scale than non-meditating controls. Fifty students from American University and other Washington DC area universities participated in the study, half of them waiting three months to learn Transcendental Meditation, to act in the meantime as the randomised control group.

### **Online news conference**

An online news conference – *including a live EEG demonstration of increased brain coherence during Transcendental Meditation* – announced the results of this study on Tuesday 24 February. It is available for replay at <http://www.BrainResearch.mum.edu>.

Speakers at the online web conference included study authors David Haaga, PhD, professor of psychology and director of the James Gray Psychotherapy Training Clinic at American University, and Fred Travis, PhD, director of the Center for Brain, Consciousness, and Cognition at Maharishi University of Management in Fairfield, Iowa.

### **"It enabled me to have a more balanced life"**

After having her brainwaves shown to become more coherent as she practised Transcendental Meditation in front of the cameras, student participant Patricia Spurio spoke on the benefits she had experienced from the technique. "I learned Transcendental Meditation right before I began my senior year in college," she reported. "I was carrying a full course load, working at a domestic violence agency, and also actively campaigning for a rally for Darfur. So there was a lot on my plate. ... I would get to the late part of the afternoon and feel the fatigue coming over me; my eyes would feel really strained

and I would feel my muscles kind of locking up. I just knew that it was time to meditate and I would sit down. Within a few minutes, I would feel my body settling down – my breath, my heart. Even my muscles would unlock. And after I was done, I was rested and felt ready to continue in activity ... I think I was able to be more present for my clients at the agency I worked at; I was more able to take on more knowledge as I studied into the evening; and also enjoy social interaction with my friends more. So I think, in general, it enabled me to have a more balanced life that year."

### **Uniqueness of Transcendental Meditation**

Addressing the question of whether other forms of meditation produce the same results as Transcendental Meditation, Dr Travis explained the different patterns of brain activity that characterise several popular types of meditation. He concluded: "In Transcendental Meditation we see global alpha activity which is associated with restful alertness, the experience of the quietness that underlies and coordinates all our activity. In summary, the procedure [of different meditation techniques] is different, the brain patterns are different, and so the benefits that one can expect are different."

### **Dr Travis will demonstrate benefits of Transcendental Meditation to British students 29, 30 April**

Dr Fred Travis will be lecturing on the subject of this research in the UK this April. He will be speaking to students – and providing live demonstrations of increased brain coherence during Transcendental Meditation – at Cambridge University on 29 April and at the Institute of Education in London on 30 April (contact Press Officer above for details).

A large body of research, including studies in academic settings around the world, supports claims by many educators that Transcendental Meditation benefits not only students' mental and physical health, and behaviour, but their academic performance too.

### **Success of Maharishi School Skelmersdale**

Dr Derek Cassells, Head Teacher of a school in Lancashire with 20 years' experience of using Transcendental Meditation in the classroom, was not surprised to learn of the new study in Washington. "Our pupils pass examinations at grades A or A\* at almost 3 times the national rate, and they pass five or more at grades A\* to C at double the national average rate. Yet we do not select pupils on the basis of academic ability. Very many of our pupils also distinguish themselves in competitions in different disciplines. These are the direct results of the children experiencing, twice every day, a unique quality of deep rest in which stresses and tensions are released, and the nervous system is restored to balance."

Dr Roger Chalmers, GP in East Anglia, in his recent review of scientific research on Transcendental Meditation\*\*\*, lists findings that endorse the benefits for students:

- Improved attention, perception, and mind-body co-ordination;
- Increased orderliness and integration of brain functioning;
- Reduced blood pressure in pre-hypertensive adolescents;
- Increased field independence (indicating greater ability to maintain broad comprehension while focusing sharply);
- Comprehensive benefits for mental health and well-being;
- Increased social maturity in college students;
- Reduced behaviour problems in students, with decreased absenteeism, rule infractions, and suspension days;
- Settled, positive atmosphere conducive to successful learning; and
- Increased harmony between students and teachers.

**The specialists Dr Fred Travis and Derek Cassells quoted above are available for interview.**

\* Available to download at <<http://www.t-m.org.uk>> – scroll down and click "PDF of

*International Journal of Psychophysiology study*"

\*\* Bewick BM, Mulhern B, Barkham M, Trusler K, et al. Changes in undergraduate student alcohol consumption as they progress through university. *BMC Public Health*, 2008; 8(163).

\*\*\* Available to download at <<http://www.t-m.org.uk/research.shtml>> – click "To print the most up-to-date review ..."

Maharishi Foundation®, registered UK charity number 270157, is the only source of courses in Transcendental Meditation™, a programme for the Development of Consciousness founded by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi®.

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## **FACT SHEET**

### **Alcohol and drug abuse among British students**

- Research reported in *The Lancet* (vol.348, no.9032, pp922-925) noted increases in alcohol and illicit drug use among university students. At that time, the report states, among the 89% of the students who drank, 61% of the men and 48% of the women exceeded "sensible" limits; hazardous drinking was reported by 15% of the drinkers; and binge drinking was declared by 28%. 20% of the sample reported regular cannabis use, and 33% used other illicit drugs. Subjective ratings of anxiety on the hospital anxiety and depression scale were high.

### **Transcendental Meditation**

- Transcendental Meditation is an effortless technique practised for 20 minutes twice a day sitting comfortably with the eyes closed.
- Transcendental Meditation is not a religion or philosophy and does not involve any belief or change in lifestyle.
- Over 350 peer-reviewed research studies on Transcendental Meditation confirm a range of benefits for mind, body, and behaviour. For a printable research review, see <<http://www.t-m.org.uk/research.shtml>>.
- Several studies have compared the effects of different meditation practices and found that Transcendental Meditation provides deeper relaxation and is more effective at reducing anxiety, depression, and hypertension than other forms of meditation and relaxation. In addition, no other meditation practice shows the widespread coherence throughout all areas the brain that is seen with Transcendental Meditation.
- Transcendental Meditation, as founded by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, is taught in Great Britain only by the registered educational charity Maharishi Foundation: charity number 270157.
- More information on Transcendental Meditation can be obtained by calling 01695 51213 or visiting the links below.

### **Links:**

<<http://t-m.org.uk>>

<<http://www.AskTheDoctors.com>>

<<http://www.ConsciousnessBasedEducation.org.uk>>

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