THE EFFECTS OF THE TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION PROGRAM ON TRAIT ANXIETY

Maureen Stern, M.Ed.
Department of Education, Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio

Research completed July 1974.

People practicing the Transcendental Meditation technique showed decreased general anxiety. — EDITORS

The Trait Anxiety scale of Spielberger's State-Trait Anxiety Inventory was administered to an experimental group of 37 subjects practicing the Transcendental Meditation technique and to a control group of 15 subjects not practicing Transcendental Meditation. The meditators were found to be significantly less anxious than the nonmeditators (t-test, \( p < .001 \)). This result is consistent with other research showing decreased anxiety among people who practice the Transcendental Meditation technique.

INTRODUCTION

The negative influence of anxiety on a wide range of behavior has been well established. Much research has been directed at finding effective techniques to reduce anxiety in a variety of situations, for instance, during learning, during performance of demanding mental and/or physical tasks, during some behavior modification procedures, and during daily activity in general. The Transcendental Meditation (TM) technique has been shown to reduce physiological and psychological indicators of anxiety (1, 2, 3, 4, 6) both on a short-term basis immediately after meditation and on a long-term basis over a period of time of practicing TM regularly twice a day. The purpose of this study was to verify previous findings of the long-term effects of TM on anxiety. It was hypothesized that the TM technique would bring about a significant reduction in trait anxiety.

METHOD

The Trait Anxiety scale of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory developed by Spielberger, Gorsuch, and Lushene (5) was used to measure the level of anxiety subjects generally felt. This scale was administered to 37 high school and college students who had been practicing Transcendental Meditation from six months to six years. These subjects volunteered from a group of people attending an advanced lecture on TM. Three days later a second group of 15 students attending a second introductory lecture on the Transcendental Meditation program, but who had not yet learned to practice the technique, volunteered to complete the Trait Anxiety scale after the lecture.

RESULTS

Table 1 and fig. 1 present the means and standard deviations of the Trait Anxiety scores for the meditating and nonmeditating groups. A t-test showed that the meditators were significantly less anxious than the nonmeditators.

![Fig. 1. Mean Trait Anxiety Score (STAI) for Meditators and Nonmeditators](468)

\( p < .001 \)}
### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>MEAN TRAIT ANXIETY SCORE</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meditators</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>42.78</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonmeditators</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>48.53</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

Since the nonmeditating control group used in this study consisted of students who were sufficiently interested in the TM program to attend two lectures on it and who, in most cases, were about to learn the technique, it seems likely that the control group was roughly comparable to the TM group apart from the effects of the technique itself. It is true that long-term studies of changes in anxiety should be conducted in which an attempt is made to control for volunteer effects, placebo effects, and experimental demand; however, the numerous studies already made on the effects of TM on anxiety and related variables suggest that anxiety increasingly declines the longer a person practices TM. The present study confirms the findings that Transcendental Meditation reduces anxiety, particularly the amount of anxiety generally felt by an individual. Therefore the practice of the TM technique should improve health and performance in a variety of situations, both mental and physical.

**References**

4. Lazar, Z.; Farwell, L.; and Farrow, J. T. 1972. The effects of the Transcendental Meditation program on anxiety, drug abuse, cigarette smoking, and alcohol consumption. (Published in this volume.)