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“Receiving accolades is gratifying, but humans benefit far more from deeper relationships.”

Robin Pendoley, Ed.M.

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## Reading Between the (Head)Lines

A different take on today's top stories  
 by Dr. Dale Archer

### Transcendental Meditation: A Treatment For Anxiety

Transcendental Meditation shows marked efficacy in treating anxiety disorders.  
 Published on October 28, 2013 by Dale Archer, M.D. in Reading Between the (Head)Lines

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Transcendental Meditation, or TM, is one of the most popular meditation programs to date and is known to be effective for stress relief and relaxation. It was founded by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi back in 1958.

We all get nervous and anxious—that's a part of life. But approximately 40 million Americans suffer from an anxiety disorder as defined by the DSM. Even though, as I discuss in my book, "Better Than Normal: How What Makes You Different Can Make You Exceptional," I think this number is grossly exaggerated, that still leaves a lot of people with the diagnosis of generalized anxiety.

Symptoms include not only the classic "excessive and intense worry or anxiety over events and/or situations" but also physical symptoms such as restlessness, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, irritability, body aches, trembling, insomnia, sweating, nausea, diarrhea, shortness of breath and rapid heartbeat.



Treatment typically involves pharmacotherapy and/or various types of psychotherapy. I consider the combination of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and medication as the gold standard for treating severe anxiety disorders though most cases fall in the mild to moderate range. However, for those with the worst anxiety there is some recent good news with respect to treatment.

According to a report published in the Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine, a meta-analysis of TM analyzed 16 trials and 1,295 participants. The conclusion was that TM worked better in reducing severe anxiety than psychotherapy or other relaxation techniques. Medication was not addressed.

Participants with anxiety levels in the 80th to 100th percentile range who practiced transcendental meditation were able to reduce anxiety to the 53rd–62nd percentile range—approaching a 50% reduction in symptoms.

More importantly, though a decrease in anxiety began within the first two weeks, the results were sustained out to three years. This opens up a fascinating field of study as to the mechanism of action and why it is sustained. As a bonus, TM also produced lower blood pressure, better sleep, improved family life, less substance abuse and a better employment situation.



Dale Archer, M.D., is a clinical psychiatrist and author of *The New York Times* bestseller, *Better Than Normal: How What Makes You Different Can Make You Exceptional*. more...

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The good news is that it's not magic and you do not need to take a class, although instructors are recommended. TM is a simple technique that can be easily learned and takes only 15 to 20 minutes twice a day.

Want to learn how to perform TM? Here's the ultra-simplified way to do it:

- First, make sure you have a solid 15 uninterrupted quiet minutes free from any distractions. Make sure it's not after eating.
- Create your own personal mantra. A mantra is a sound, word or even a phrase which brings you peace and affirmation. Your mantra can be changed as you go and grow.
- Sit comfortably and close your eyes. Be still, and begin repeating your mantra silently. Concentrate on the sound or words of the mantra, while blocking out all other thoughts and keep repeating your mantra for the entire 15 minutes.


That's it, with apologies for the over simplification to all the experts and instructors out there. And to be fair, you may find it difficult at first to block out all the intrusive thoughts that most of us have rumbling around in our head.





Most of the claims out there for herbal treatments and quick fix cures for depression and anxiety have little basis in science. True, this was a meta-analysis and more prospective double-blind placebo controlled studies are needed. But this is an exciting finding—treating severe generalized anxiety on your own.

Of course, the problem is who will fund the research? It costs an average of four billion dollars for a major pharmaceutical company to produce an FDA approved drug and a single large clinical trial can cost up to 100 million dollars. There is no champion out there for TM, because after all it's cheap or free and easily learned—no profit margin there. But in an ideal world it would be great if a treating doc prescribed TM first before immediately reaching for the prescription pad.

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