

Transcendental Meditation: Medical Miracle or Other Kooky Fad?"

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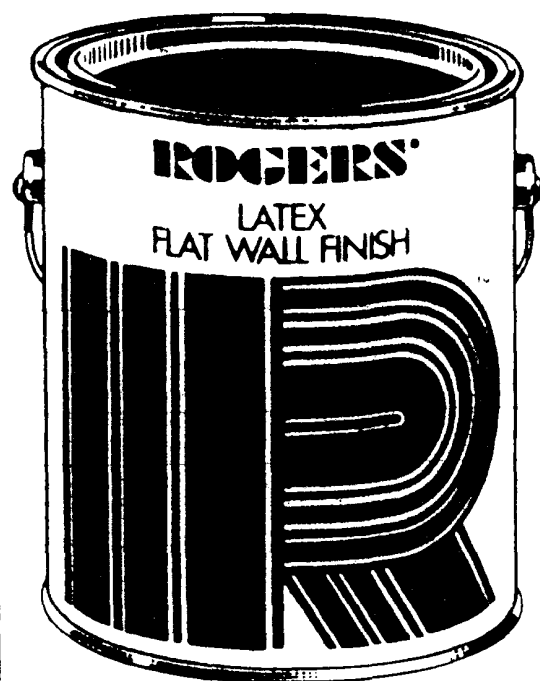
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In his first study of 400 medi-
tators in California, Dr. Wal-
lace found that a large majority
had fewer colds, headaches,
allergic reactions and periods
of depression. Most dramatic
a survey of 1,862 meditators by
the Wallace-Benson team
turned up evidence that drug
abuse (including the use of
marijuana, heroin and LSD)
had declined sharply after reg-
ular meditation. "Practically all
of them," Dr. Benson com-
mented, "said they had given up
drugs because they felt their
meditation experience was su-
perior to what they achieve
through drugs. And drugs inter-
fered with their ability to med-
itate." (However, Dr. Benson,
a meticulous researcher, cau-
tions that his study did not in-
clude a control group of others
who tried to end their addiction
without TM.)

What's it all about? The cur-
rent transcendental-meditation
surge stems from the mystic
Maharishi Mahesh Yogi of
India (remember him—the
Gandhi-looking mystic who
talked through his nose and was
making appearances on the
"Tonight" show a few years
ago?). For a while, TM faded.
But now it's back again and
picking up hordes of student
adherents.

As expounded by fervent
disciples, TM aims to make
life more fulfilling, help us
gain heightened awareness, and
develop creative intelligence.
The natural tendency of the
mind, they contend, is to seek
a field of greater happiness.

"The technique," the Maha-
rishi explains, somewhat ob-
scurely, "turns the attention in-
ward toward the subtle levels
of a thought until the mind
transcends (or surpasses) the
experiences of the subtlest states
of the thought and arrives at the
source of the thought." Thus,
presumably, the meditator at-
tains his natural "true being."

To allow the transcending
process to function, the medita-
tor focuses on a "mantra," a
euphonious though meaningless
word or syllables from Sanskrit

School, they attached electrodes
and other sensing devices to
hundreds of people while they
were doing TM. Among the re-
sults reported:

—The work load on medita-
tors' hearts was reduced by
about 25 percent.

Their metabolic rate de-
creased significantly (resulting
in less tension on the body).

—They drew fewer breaths,
with smaller amounts of carbon
dioxide exhaled, to a level
usually achieved only after six
hours of sleep.

Their blood generated less
lactic acid, a possible sign of
reduced anxiety.

—Their skin produced less
sweat—a sign of a relaxed state.
—The brain's alpha waves in-
creased in frequency, another
sign of profound relaxation.