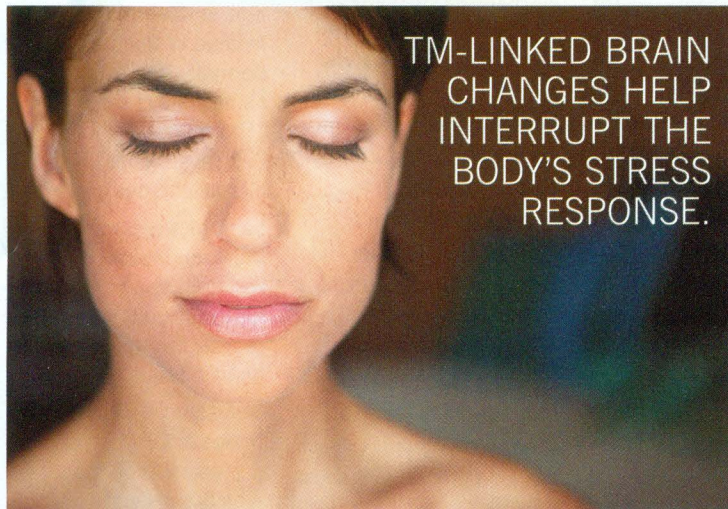




# Quiet Gain

Practicing the ancient art of transcendental meditation can improve your health

**Two years ago**, Marisa McGinnis, a 63-year-old attorney from Burlingame, Calif., suffered every parent's worst nightmare. Her 14-year-old son took his own life. McGinnis turned to transcendental meditation (TM) to help her cope. At the Transcendental Meditation Program website ([www.tm.org](http://www.tm.org)), McGinnis found a nearby teacher and started practicing. "It was life-changing," she says.



Popularized by the Beatles' guru in the 1960s, TM is enjoying renewed interest. Celebrities including the singer Moby and actor Russell Brand are endorsing its benefits, from help for quitting addictions to improved creativity. In 2005, film director David Lynch formed a foundation to bring TM into schools, prisons, and homeless shelters, among other places.

And TM has gathered some research chops, too. Norman E. Rosenthal, MD, clinical professor of psychiatry at Washington, D.C.'s Georgetown University Medical School and author of *Transcendence: Healing and*

*Transformation Through Transcendental Meditation*, recently completed a small study of TM's effects on veterans with combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). "Before our research was over, three of our clinicians had gotten TM training," Rosenthal says. "That's how impressed they were with what they saw."

TM is one meditation technique among many. It has you silently and effortlessly recite a mantra, a soothing sound without meaning. As a result, muscles unwind, breathing slows, and the pituitary gland releases prolactin, a hormone thought to have a calming effect, Rosenthal says.

Research also shows enhanced brain activity during TM, such as increased alpha brain waves, which are linked with rest and reflection. TM increases brain wave coherence too, meaning different parts of the brain work in better harmony. That can lead to greater focus and competence. "In seasoned meditators, this coordinated response spills over into other parts of the day," Rosenthal says.

The health benefits? Plenty, according to more than 300 peer-reviewed articles. TM-linked brain changes help interrupt the body's stress response, helpful for people with problems ranging from anxiety to high blood pressure (HBP) and heart disease. A study of 60 African Americans with HBP even showed a link between TM and reduced atherosclerosis.

McGinnis credits TM not only for improving her health but also for motivating her to launch a poetry website. "There are an indescribable number of benefits of being in the present," she says.—Annie Stuart

## TRY IT

Those who practice TM sit 15 to 20 minutes twice daily with eyes closed and silently repeat a mantra an instructor has given them. Want to give it a try? Norman E. Rosenthal, MD, offers some tips:

### Learn from an expert.

TM proponents suggest a customized approach to allow for feedback and ensure you're using the technique correctly. Instruction is a series of seven steps, with teachers providing ongoing mentoring as needed.

**Go easy.** With TM, there's no need to either focus on thoughts or push them away. Simply use the mantra as the means to settle your mind.

**Stick with it.** Give yourself a few months of twice-daily meditation for it to become a habit. "As with any practice, it's a skill you need to acquire," Rosenthal says. "It took me a month or two."

**Be careful.** TM should not be used as a replacement for needed health care. Be sure to ask about the training and experience of a teacher and determine whether TM has been researched for any health issues you need to address.



More than 100 schools worldwide have TM "quiet time" programs for students.

Be still. Get more **meditation tips.**



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