

Could the military use meditation to create peace?

David Hughes

All his life, Einstein searched for proof of one underlying field of creation - a 'unified field,' more basic and many hundreds of thousands of times more powerful than the nuclear level. Today, scientists around the globe are beginning to believe that such a field indeed exists; and there's growing evidence that a simple technique, Transcendental Meditation, may access this field and harness its power to create peace in the world.

What's more, some military authorities are quietly taking the idea seriously, and have begun applying it for themselves.

The physics of world peace

An age-old technique re-introduced and popularised by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in 1957, Transcendental Meditation, or TM, might seem a long way from quantum physics. Yet over the past 40 years, physicists have noticed that at quantum levels, the distinction between consciousness and matter seems curiously blurred. Particles can change according to whether or not they are being observed, as described in Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, while the first architect of quantum theory, Max Planck, declared: "I regard matter as derivative from consciousness."

TM's source, the ancient Vedic tradition of India - a non-religious tradition detailing strategies to unfold human potential - says matter is indeed derivative from consciousness. This suggests that the field beyond the most microscopic elementary particle can be directly experienced as a field of dynamic, silent wakefulness beyond the faintest levels of thought.

Taking awareness beyond thought is where Transcendental Meditation comes in. An effortless process, practised sitting comfortably with eyes closed, TM involves neither contemplation nor concentration, either of which would hold the attention in mental activity. With precise instructions, tailored to each individual, the technique uses a mantra - a sound which the meditator thinks effortlessly - to help the attention settle to the field of energy, alertness and happiness at the source of thought.

Experiencing this state is deeply refreshing for mind and body, reducing stress, increasing energy and promoting inner fulfilment. 600 scientific studies, including major research funded by the US National Institutes of Health, have measured a wide range of benefits to the individual from regular practice of TM. In particular, measuring brain activity demonstrated a restfully alert state in



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the area that triggers the 'fight or flight' response.

But, with the idea that consciousness is a field, it also seems that a calming, coherent influence can be radiated to other people - like waves spreading out on a pond - if a threshold number of individuals are experiencing it. This is where the potential of the technique to prevent conflict comes from.

As few as 1% of a population practising Transcendental Meditation will produce measurable improvements for society, Maharishi predicted in the early 1960s. Subsequently dubbed 'the Maharishi Effect,' this is now a well-researched phenomenon, with 23 studies finding significant falls in crime, terrorist attacks and war-related deaths occurring when large groups were practising TM and an advanced technique called 'Yogic Flying.'

Data compiled by the Rand Corporation associated three large assemblies practising the techniques during 1983-85 with a 32% drop in international conflict. In 1993, a project where predicted outcomes were lodged in advance with government and newspapers, saw a TM group of 4,000 participants in Washington DC bring the city's crime rate down by 24% - a result that matched predictions and had

less than two parts per billion of being due to chance.

In response to research on the Maharishi Effect, Raymond Russ PhD, professor of psychology at the University of Maine and editor of Journal of Mind and Behaviour, said the hypothesis raised eyebrows among reviewers but the statistical work was sound. "This evidence indicates that we now have a new technology to create peace in the world," he said.

Ending and preventing war

Disillusioned with the failure of conventional military approaches to break the relentless cycle of atrocity and revenge and create lasting peace, veterans as diverse as Indian former anti-terrorism expert, Major-General (Ret) Kulwant Singh, and General-Major (Ret) Leonid Shersnev, a former Soviet leader in Afghanistan, now support the creation of 'prevention wings' in the military - troops using TM to calm international tensions and make every nation free from enemies.

One leader who used this approach is President Joaquim Alberto Chissano of Mozambique, who in the early 1990s sought a means to end a devastating 16-year civil war. "First I started the

practice of Transcendental Meditation myself, then introduced the practice to my close family, my cabinet of ministers, my government officers and my military," he said. "The result has been political peace."

16,000 soldiers learned Transcendental Meditation and the technique became part of the curriculum for cadets at the national military academy. Soon afterwards, the civil war ended, crime rates dropped, and economic growth, predicted at 6%, soared to 19%.

In Ecuador, also in the 1990s, Lieutenant General Jose Marti Villamil de la Cadena, vice-minister of defence, instigated the Coherence Project, in which 3,000 officers, cadets and troops were taught TM, which, he said, prevented the escalation of a conflict which had broken out with neighbouring Peru.

Permanent prevention

Dr David Leffler, a leading global proponent of this approach, spent 8 years with the US Air Force, and later served as an associate of the Proteus Management Group at the Center for Strategic Leadership, US Army War College. The US military, he believes,

could become a powerful global peacekeeper by utilising TM. "A carrier battle group can contain around 10,000 people; and if enough of them were practising the advanced programmes of Transcendental Meditation, when they reached a conflict zone, they could calm things down at a distance," he says.

Papers and articles on the subject have been published by military and scientific journals, and presentations on the use of Transcendental Meditation to resolve conflict have been given to thinktanks and military conferences worldwide, including the Pentagon, the Russian Air Force Academy, the Russian Academy of Sciences, and the Korean Institute of Defence (KIDA).

"Wars," says the United Nations charter, "begin in the minds of men." Einstein would surely have been delighted to know that in the not-too-distant future, through a technology of his sought-after unified field, that is also where they may end.

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