

DAVID LYNCH FOUNDATION UK



## OPERATION WARRIOR WELLNESS

Building resilience and healing the  
hidden wounds of war



“When I came back from Afghanistan, I was angry, depressed, and suicidal. Transcendental Meditation has lifted my depression, eased my pain and given me my life back.”

– Luke Jensen, Operation Enduring Freedom Veteran

## **OPERATION WARRIOR WELLNESS**

Operation Warrior Wellness – a David Lynch Foundation UK initiative offers Transcendental Meditation® (TM), a scientifically proven approach, which can be easily learned and practised in private, to help veterans overcome the nightmare of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), while simultaneously promoting resiliency and improved performance in civilian life. Thousands of veterans have learned Transcendental Meditation in the USA and research on meditating veterans has shown that the technique not only reduces the psychosocial symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression, but also balances serotonin and norepinephrine, and regulates the sympathetic nervous system.

The David Lynch Foundation UK works in collaboration with national and local veterans' organisations to provide individual and group programmes to heal the wounds of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder among veterans, support the families of veterans with PTSD who are hospitalised or have lost their lives due to combat or suicide, and empower military personnel and military students with the tools to promote mental and physical resiliency.

In 2012 the US Department of Defense granted the Maharishi University of Management Research Institute and the San Diego Veterans Administration Medical Center \$2.4 million to further research the effectiveness of using Transcendental Meditation to treat PTSD.



## REDUCING THE HUMAN TOLL AND FINANCIAL COSTS OF PTSD

Operation Warrior Wellness offers the Transcendental Meditation programme—that directly affects the neurophysiology underlying PTSD and thereby eliminates, rather than masks, the disorder’s debilitating symptoms. Providing Transcendental Meditation as a treatment option for military personnel and veterans will not only improve the quality of their life by keeping them healthier but also allow them to remain productive members of the military and society. In addition, the practice of Transcendental Meditation can significantly contribute to the reduction of future medical care among veterans and can reduce the human and financial costs of PTSD. The addition of Transcendental Meditation as a treatment option can also speed recovery and enhance the effects of other treatment modalities.



“The military’s first foray into meditation goes back to 1985, when it found in a small pilot study that Transcendental Meditation ...significantly decreased the stress and anxiety levels of Vietnam veterans. Within three months, 70 percent of them meditating vets no longer needed the support...”

*Bloomberg Business, 6 February, 2013*



## A MONUMENTAL PROBLEM

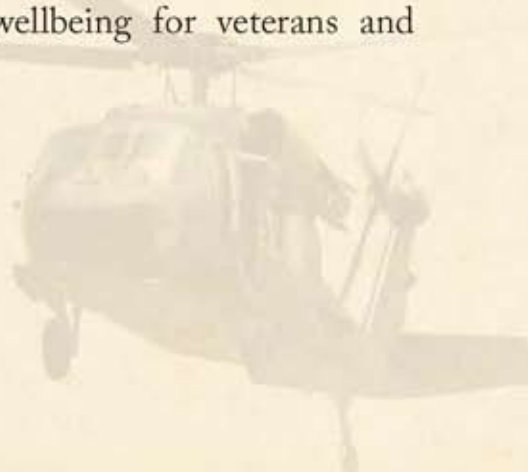
More than 100,000 British troops have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan over the last 10 years and military charities estimate that thousands of them have been psychologically affected.

The large number of returning military personnel with PTSD, the shortage of effective treatment options, and the high cost of care urgently call for more effective treatment approaches.

PTSD is an anxiety disorder that often occurs in military personnel who have experienced or witnessed trauma. Symptoms of PTSD include anxiety, hypervigilance, exaggerated startle response, nightmares or flashbacks, insomnia, outbursts of anger, and social withdrawal. Veterans with PTSD also exhibit evidence of over-arousal of their sympathetic nervous system (exaggerated fight-or-flight response), as indicated by levels of alpha-amylase, an enzyme secreted into the saliva. Conventional approaches to treating PTSD include counselling/cognitive therapy, exposure therapy, and medication, and can require long-term inpatient or outpatient treatment. Exposure therapy involves special equipment that simulates battlefield conditions.

Many veterans are reluctant to seek help for PTSD within the military and armed services for fear of being stigmatised, and veterans administration health care resources are over extended, which means most veterans do not receive adequate care.

The David Lynch Foundation UK supports “Operation Warrior Wellness” – a unique meditation-based approach to relieve traumatic stress, develop resilience, and promote wellbeing for veterans and military personnel and their families.





“There was a more profound relaxation state while I was doing Transcendental Meditation and I found myself not being on such a high alert. Not so agitated with things around me.”

– GySgt Richard Wilson, USMC

## BENEFITS OF TM PRACTICE

1. Decreased high blood pressure (as shown in nine studies with 711 patients)
2. Decreased thickness of the carotid artery wall (a measure of atherosclerosis) after nine months in patients with coronary artery disease
3. Prevention of increase in mass of the left ventricle (evidence of reduced strain on the heart) after seven months in people with high blood pressure
4. Reduced insulin resistance after four months in people with cardiac disease (insulin resistance is associated with diabetes and metabolic problems)
5. A 30 percent reduction in cardiovascular mortality (results of a ten-year follow-up study)
6. Decreased anxiety (as shown in a meta-analysis of 146 studies)
7. Decreased cigarette smoking, alcohol and drug abuse (19 studies)
8. Significant decreases in PTSD symptoms among Vietnam veterans compared to controls<sup>4</sup>
9. Significant decreases in PTSD symptoms among Vietnam veterans with concurrent substance abuse as compared to controls, who received only psychoeducation<sup>5</sup>
10. Substantially reduced anxiety and depression with improved enjoyment of life among veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan<sup>5</sup>
11. An average 50 percent reduction in levels of salivary alpha-amylase, a biological marker of stress, among veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, suggesting that regular TM practise may lower sympathetic nervous system activity<sup>5</sup>

## REFERENCES

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3. Dillbeck, M.C., & Orme-Johnson, D.W. (1987). Physiological differences between Transcendental Meditation and rest. *American Psychologist*, 42, 879–881.
4. Brooks, J.S., & Scarano, T. (1985). Transcendental Meditation in the treatment of post Vietnam adjustment. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 64, 212–215.
5. Rosenthal, J., Grosswald, S., Ross, R., & Rosenthal, N. (2010, in review). Effects of Transcendental Meditation (TM) in veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): a pilot study.





“At first, I couldn’t wait to meditate because I wouldn’t be stressed out for at least those 20 minutes. Then after a few weeks, I started to look forward to having the whole day stress-free.”

– David George, Infantryman, US Army 101st Airbourne Division







“ When I learned Transcendental Meditation, I could not believe what happened. It was the difference between heaven and hell. It was absolutely transformational – all that feeling of stress and all that feeling of heaviness – I could feel it melt away from my head to my feet. From that moment on things changed. No more drugs, no more alcohol. My emotions came back. My life came back.”

– Dan Burks, Veteran of the Vietnam War

## FACTS

### **Why treat PTSD sufferers with Transcendental Meditation?**

1. Transcendental Meditation is a widely practised mental technique, easily taught in a standardised way, that has been shown to induce physiological responses consistent with a relaxed state.
2. Transcendental Meditation does not involve the ability to concentrate or control the mind—skills required in other forms of meditation that can prove difficult for those suffering the intrusive thoughts and flashbacks often experienced in PTSD.
3. There is evidence that Transcendental Meditation relaxes the sympathetic nervous system so that it responds only when stressed and not when the individual is at rest.<sup>1,2</sup>
4. Transcendental Meditation is simple to learn and is suitable for both civilian and military practitioners who are suffering from PTSD.<sup>3</sup>
5. An active service member can utilise Transcendental Meditation privately without alerting co-workers to his condition with its associated stigma.

### **How Transcendental Meditation works**

One important way in which Transcendental Meditation exerts many of its beneficial effects is by decreasing overactivity of the sympathetic nervous system (fight-or-flight response). In response to stresses such as loud noises, TM meditators show a brisk alarm response followed by a quicker return to baseline than non-meditators. They also have fewer “false alarms” that is, they do not show these alarm responses in the absence of stress.

Ideally, the fight-or-flight system should only be activated in response to a stress. People who have this system turned on when they are not actively being stressed (such as veterans with PTSD) would be expected to show wear and tear both physically and mentally. By shortening the alarm response to stress, Transcendental Meditation returns the sympathetic nervous system to more efficient functioning and reduces physical and psychological symptoms of stress.



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## LINKS

[OperationWarriorWellness.org](http://OperationWarriorWellness.org)

[DavidLynchFoundation.org.uk](http://DavidLynchFoundation.org.uk)

[T-M.org.uk](http://T-M.org.uk)

[DoctorsonTM.org](http://DoctorsonTM.org)

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