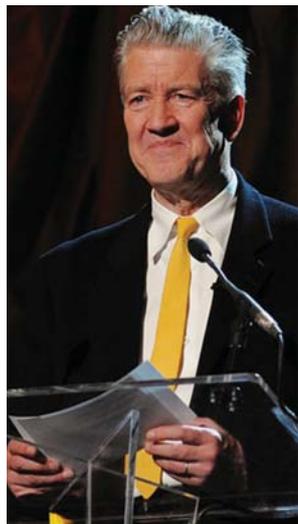


THE DAVID LYNCH FOUNDATION BRINGS MEDITATION TO A TROUBLED WORLD



David Lynch opens the first annual “Change Begins Within” benefit concert at Radio City Music Hall in NYC, April 2009.

By Lorraine Cancro, MSW
Iconic filmmaker
David Lynch

remembers now how he recoiled from the concept of meditation when he heard about it in the late 1960s, when the movement — founded by the renowned Indian meditation teacher Maharishi Mahesh Yogi — was experiencing its first wave of

popularity among young people in the West thanks to the songs and support by pop stars like the Beatles, Beach Boys, and Donovan.

“The word ‘harmony’ would make me want to puke,” recalled Lynch. “Meditation would be a sickening thing to consider, because you want that edge to create,” he said, wearing worn khaki trousers and a tattered black sports jacket with a hole in the right elbow the size of a saucer. “I don’t want to be a namby-pamby.”

That all changed in 1973, when the future filmmaker discovered Transcendental Meditation (TM), which he believes allowed him to quiet — and, at the same time, unleash — his considerable inner creative forces. He said that he has not missed a day of meditating since.

And now, the low-key auteur is emerging as the most visible, at times highly activist, proponent of the resurgent practice, which is being used increasingly in schools and in the workplace, as well as by a new generation of stars, including Ellen DeGeneres, Russell Brand, Russell Simmons, Heather Graham, Laura Dern and the recording industry maven Rick Rubin.

David Lynch Foundation Established to Bring Meditation to At-risk Youth

In July 2005, Lynch launched the David Lynch Foundation for Consciousness-Based Education and World Peace, which has now provided Transcendental Meditation scholarships for 200,000 at-risk, underserved students in middle schools and high schools throughout the country and worldwide. Later that year, Lynch embarked on a series of lectures on college campuses in the US and worldwide that would draw over 100,000 young people and garner significant attention in the news media.

Lynch wrote a book about his experiences on the road, “Catching the Big Fish: Meditation, Consciousness, and Creativity”

(Tarcher/Penguin), which is now reaching an international audience.

“It’s weird,” said Lynch. “I guess it’s as simple as this: I wish I had heard it earlier.”

One of the most frequently asked questions of Lynch is: What is an edgy artist like you doing promoting the bliss of meditation rather than the angst of suffering? His answer is always right to the point: “Artists like to say, ‘I like a little bit of suffering and anger;’” he said. “But if you had a splitting headache, diarrhea and vomiting, how much would you enjoy the work and how much work would you get done? Maybe suffering is a romantic idea to get girls, but it’s an enemy to creativity.

“As a heart surgeon, I see the effects of stress on the heart. We believe TM can help a lot of people. That’s why it’s important to understand exactly how effectively this meditation reduces stress and stress-related disorders.”

—Mehmet Oz, M.D., 3-year meditator

“It’s like a key that opens the door to the treasury within,” he said. “Here’s an experience — poof! — total brain coherence. It’s what’s missing from life today: unbounded intelligence, creativity, bliss, love, energy, peace. Things like tension, anxieties, traumatic stress, sorrow, depression, hate, rage, need for revenge, fear — poof! — all this starts to lift away. You see life getting better and better and better. Give the people that experience and



Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr share the stage during the first annual “Change Begins Within” benefit concert at Radio City Music Hall in April 2009.

In 2011, Lynch donated \$1-Million to launch Operations Warrior Wellness to help veterans overcome post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other war-related illnesses through Transcendental Meditation.

— poooft. Man, it's beautiful," Lynch said.

So, what is Transcendental Meditation?

Transcendental Meditation is a trademarked mental technique introduced by Maharishi in 1958 based on the proposition that a practitioner, by silently repeating a personal mantra throughout two 20-minute sessions a day, can achieve a state of "restful alertness"—and, theoretically, tap into a "unified field" of energy. The training process involves working with personal instructors over five days at one of about 1,000 Transcendental Meditation centers worldwide, and it costs about \$1,500 for the initial training and a lifetime of follow-up—with special discounts and scholarships for students, military personnel and veterans, retired people, and the unemployed.

"David has become a huge promoter of TM," said Donovan, whose real name is Donovan Leitch. Leitch learned the practice from Maharishi himself, along with the Beatles, Mia Farrow and Mike Love of the Beach Boys, in Rishikesh, India, in 1968. Leitch added that Lynch has been able to capitalize on his fame and "redirect meditation back where it belongs, with the students."

Extensive scientific research

During the past 40 years, the TM practice has been the subject of 340 scientific studies, conducted at leading medical schools and research institutions and published in top scientific journals. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has awarded nearly \$30 million to study its impact on stress and heart disease. Numerous studies have shown that meditating middle school and high school students have higher grade point averages and test scores, higher graduation rates, and

decreased suspensions, expulsions, and drop-out rates.

"I want to offer my support and encouragement in these efforts to help children and veterans, and anyone who needs the help to overcome stress through meditation."

—Martin Scorsese, 2-year meditator

In the past few years, hundreds of schools worldwide have implemented the technique into their curriculum. Called "Quiet Time," students and teachers meditate for 10 to 15 minutes at the beginning and end of each day.

"Grades and attendance go up 20% to 30% and suspensions and expulsions go down," Lynch says. "Instead of giving the kids drugs like Ritalin that just numb them, we give them a technique to reduce stress and focus better."

At Trinity College in Hartford, the women's squash league began meditating together after every practice last year. The Doe Fund, an organization that assists the homeless, has begun offering TM to its residents to help them master courses in computer skills and job training.

Launch of Operation Warrior Wellness

In 2011, the filmmaker behind the movies "Blue Velvet" and "Mulholland Drive" organized for his foundation to donate \$1 million to launch Operations Warrior Wellness in Los Angeles, an initiative to help 10,000 veterans overcome post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other war-related illnesses through



TV talk show host Ellen DeGeneres welcomes the crowd with some major laughs at DLF'S "Change Begins Within III" at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in December 2011.



Operation Warrior Wellness was launched in 2011.

United States Military Section

Transcendental Meditation.

To that end, Lynch said Operation Warrior Wellness is working with military bases and military colleges, as well as veteran service organizations. The demand is enormous.

“When you consider the anxieties of combat that our men and women of the Armed Forces endure, then it’s clear that TM is a great tool for them.”

—Clint Eastwood, 40-year meditator

Understanding the Disorder

“PTSD is a psychiatric disorder that often occurs in military personnel who have experienced or witnessed a trauma,” said Norman Rosenthal, MD, a Georgetown University Medical School psychiatrist and author of the New York Times bestseller, “Transcendence: Healing and Transformation through Transcendental Meditation.”

“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, or exaggerated fight-or-flight response.”

Urgent Need for New Treatments

Dr. Rosenthal explained that conventional approaches to treating PTSD have demonstrated limited success. Such approaches include counseling/cognitive therapy, exposure therapy, virtual reality therapy and medication.

“Some of these therapies are extensive and involve several months in residence—making it difficult to reach all the PTSD sufferers who need treatment. Because many veterans are reluctant to seek help for PTSD within the military for fear of being stigmatized, and because Veterans Administration health care resources are overextended, most veterans do not receive adequate care,” Dr. Rosenthal said.

“I’ve been practicing Transcendental Meditation most of my life. I think it does something good to your nervous system. It has given me a calmness I don’t think I had at 19.”

—Jerry Seinfeld, 41-year meditator

Dr. Rosenthal recently completed a pilot study on the impact of TM on PTSD, which was published in the Military magazine. The research showed a 50% reduction in PTSD symptoms among meditating veterans. Other findings have shown that the TM technique:

- **Physical health:** Reduces stress and stress-related illness and improves overall health and longevity
- **Emotional health:** Reduces anxiety and depression and increases contentment, integrity, and ability to resist peer pressure
- **Social and family health:** Increases tolerance and improves personal and family relationships
- **Spiritual:** Increases self-confidence, moral maturity, and self-actualization—allowing the soldier to deeply connect with

his or her own internal compass as a guide throughout life

CNN anchor Candy Crowley, who is on the board of advisors of Operation Warrior Wellness, said: “The initial research offers so much hope: reduced anxiety, depression, hypervigilance, and insomnia, as well as reductions in substance abuse, violent behavior, and suicidal tendencies—better than many things being tried and at far less a cost.”

Lynch says the reason his foundation has grown so fast is, well, basically, TM works. But he also credited the growing number of prominent meditating artists, musicians, actors and television personalities who have lent their considerable support.

Beginning in April 2009 with the first “Change Begins Within” benefit fundraiser at an historic concert at Radio City Music Hall in New York City with former Beatles Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr (along with Jerry Seinfeld, Cheryl Crow, Eddie Vedder, and Ben Harper), the David Lynch Foundation has benefited enormously from high-profile galas that bring global media attention and financial support to the cause.

The momentum continued in December 2010, with “Change Begins Within II” at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art with celebrity support coming from Mehmet Oz, MD, host of the Emmy-award winning Dr Oz Show, Russell Brand, and Clint Eastwood and Martin Scorsese (via videocast). And just this past December, the third annual “Change Begins Within” gala shifted coasts to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art with Ellen DeGeneres joining Russell Brand and Russell Simmons as headlining hosts.

Brand spoke passionately and sincerely about the emotional solace he has found in Transcendental Meditation, describing how TM has helped him repair his psychic wounds.

“Transcendental Meditation has been incredibly valuable to me both in my recovery as a drug addict and in my personal life, my professional life,” Brand said. “I literally had an idea drop into my brain the other day while I was meditating which I think is worth millions of dollars.”

“You are infinite...”

Bob Roth, Executive Director of the David Lynch Foundation, has worked closely with Lynch to launch and grow the foundation to where it is today. Roth has been a teacher of Transcendental Meditation for 40 years, and author of the definitive book on the technique, entitled, fittingly, “Transcendental Meditation,” published in 21 countries.

“Meditation, properly understood and practiced, allows the mind to settle down effortlessly deep within to quieter levels of thought until the quietest, most refined level of thinking is transcended (that means going beyond the field of thought) and you are left alone with your Self... the big Self, the Knower, the Experiencer, You.

“And who are you?” Roth asks. “When you experience your Self you will know for certain... You are infinite, unbounded, eternal... a limitless reservoir of energy, intelligence, and bliss...” •

For more information and links:

www.DavidLynchFoundation.org

www.OperationWarriorWellness.org

www.DLF.tv * www.TM.org