



CANADIAN WOMEN'S WELLNESS INITIATIVE

Improving the Health and Well-Being of Canadians

Helping Veterans and Their Families Thrive: An Innovative Approach to Family Well-Being

Background

In 2019, the Canadian Women's Wellness Initiative (CWWI) was awarded a grant from Veterans Affairs Canada's *Veteran and Family Well-Being Fund* to offer **stress reduction training in the form of the Transcendental Meditation (TM®) program to both veterans and their spouses and family members.**

The Transcendental Meditation technique is a stress-reduction tool that can be useful for individuals experiencing traumatic stress. TM is a simple, natural procedure that is easy to learn and enjoyable to practise. When practised on a regular basis, TM can bring relief from stress, anxiety, depression, high blood pressure, and insomnia. In short, TM improves a person's overall perspective on life while bringing benefits to every part of life.

TM is taught by a certified TM teacher in a course where participants attend 12 meetings over a period of 6 months. After learning TM, participants receive a lifetime of free follow-up with a certified TM teacher whenever they feel the need.

It has been found that TM can be effectively implemented for any population exposed to traumatic levels of stress. In Canada, the TM technique has been taught to veterans, police, firefighters, students at risk, and low-income families. In the United States, TM has been taught to veterans, active-duty military personnel, prisoners, and students in inner-city schools. In the US, TM has also been taught to the homeless and to women who are victims of domestic violence. As it has been found that TM can be effective in any population that experiences high levels of stress, it is felt that TM can be effective in reducing the stress experienced by Canadian veterans and their families.

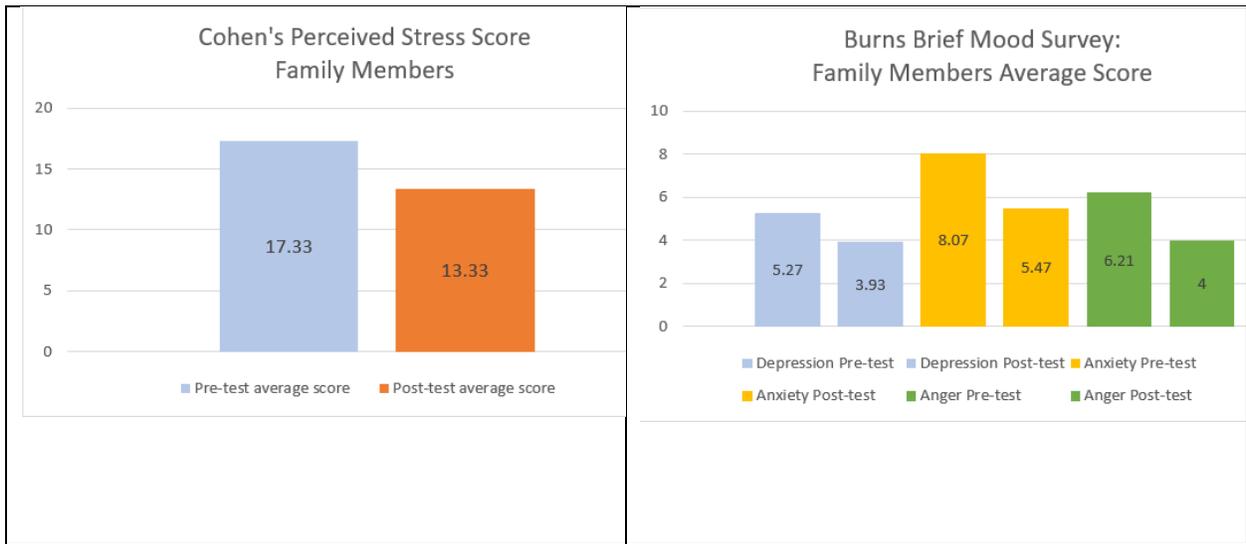
Results of the Project

In a similar project implemented in 2019-2020 by CWWI, researchers tracked participants' results by measuring the degree to which participating veterans and their family members experienced changes in their levels of stress, depression, anxiety, and anger after being taught and practising the Transcendental Meditation technique for three months. The pre-test was administered just prior to learning the TM technique; the post-test was administered 12 weeks after learning the TM technique.

Veterans experienced, on average, a 22% decrease in perceived stress in just 12 weeks. In that same time period, veterans also experienced a 38.24% decrease in depression, a 45.24% decrease in anxiety, and a 35.35% decrease in anger.

Family members experienced a 23.08% decrease in perceived stress, a 25.42% decrease in depression, a 32.21% decrease in anxiety, and a 35.69% decrease in anger.

Charts of Findings



Comments from the Participants

As well as administering quantitative measures, CWWI researchers asked participants to describe what they experienced as a result of three months of TM practice. Here are some of the responses:

- “Physical PTSD pains have lessened and diminished in intensity.”
- “With the big transition I am making into a retired life, I find I am now excited to move forward, versus the fear and anxiety I previously had.”
- “I have more energy and drive; I look forward to being active. The only challenge has been due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which restricts my activities.”
- “My mental energy has improved exponentially. My outlook is much more positive and I don’t feel the mental fatigue I did before. I feel more balanced and in control.”
- “I sleep better and I have more energy when I meditate consistently.”
- “I connect better with my wife – communicate better, moods are stable.”
- “The most rewarding part of TM for me is my reduction in stress. As I have continued to practise, I have noticed how relaxed I am.”
- “I am now (after 15 years!) on 1/3 of a dose of my anxiety medication.”
- “Simply happier.”
- “I don’t blow up as much.”
- “Definitely positive impact in personal relationships. Big reduction in anger and violent reactivity.”
- “Physically have not seen much benefit, but experience less anxiety, less reactivity, and better ability to manage frustrations.”

The Canadian Women’s Wellness Initiative has been awarded additional funding to continue the project until June, 2023. The program is available to veterans in Vancouver, Victoria, Edmonton, Tweed, Peterborough, Kingston, Ottawa, Montreal, and Fredericton.

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