



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 regularly, TM can relieve 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.

A certified TM teacher teaches TM in a course where participants attend 12 meetings over six months. After learning TM, participants receive a lifetime of free follow-up with a certified TM teacher whenever needed.

TM can be effectively implemented for any population exposed to traumatic stress levels. In Canada, the TM technique has been taught to veterans, police, firefighters, at-risk students, and low-income families. In the United States, TM has been introduced to veterans, active-duty military personnel, prisoners, and students in inner-city schools. In the US, TM has also been taught to people experiencing homelessness and women who are domestic violence victims. Because TM can be effective in any population with high-stress levels, TM can be effective in reducing the stress experienced by Canadian Veterans and their families.

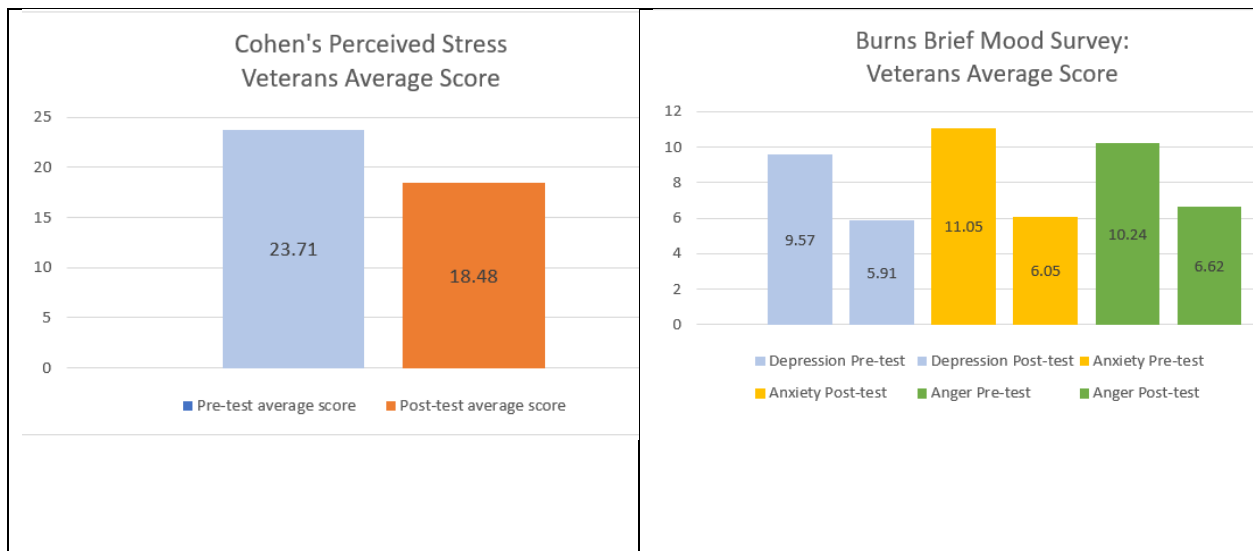
Results of the Project

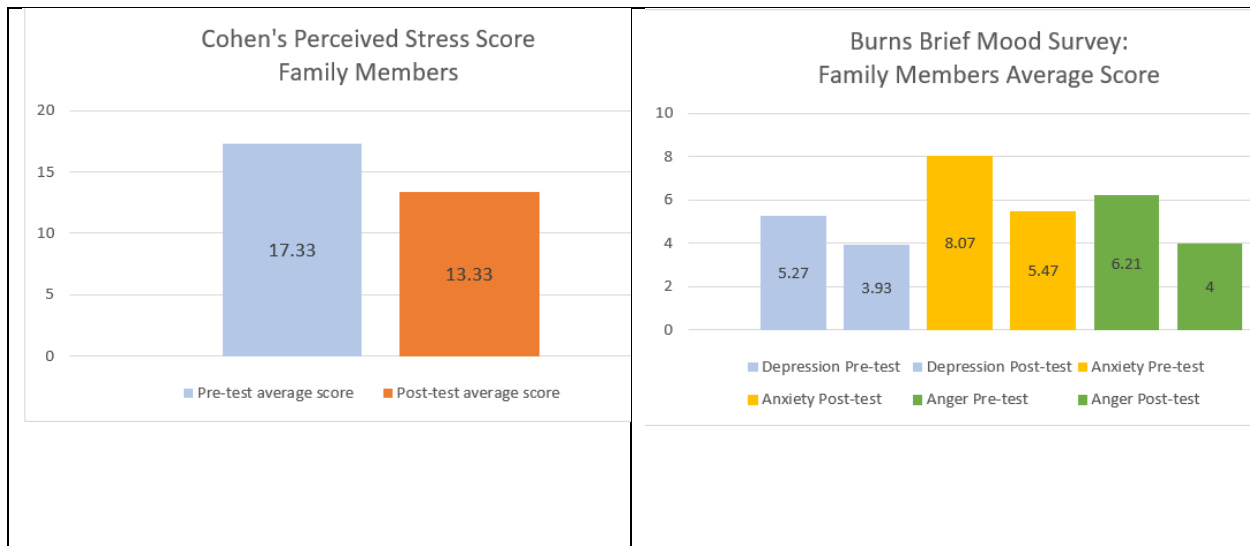
In a similar project implemented in 2019-2020 by CWWI, researchers tracked participants' results by measuring the degree to which participating veterans and their family members experienced changes in their levels of stress, depression, anxiety, and anger after being taught and practising the Transcendental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

- o "Physical PTSD pains have lessened and diminished in intensity."
- o "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."
- o "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."
- o "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."
- o "I sleep better, and I have more energy when I meditate consistently."
- o "I connect better with my wife – communicate better, moods are stable."
- o "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."
- o "I am now (after 15 years!) on 1/3 of a dose of my anxiety medication."
- o "Simply happier."
- o "I don't blow up as much."
- o "Definitely positive impact on personal relationships. A big reduction in anger and violent reactivity."

o "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 2025. The program is available in Vancouver, Victoria, Edmonton, Calgary Tweed, Peterborough, Kingston, Ottawa, Montreal, Fredericton and Saint John. The program is also sometimes available in locations in Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

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