

## **Government of Alberta-Funded Project: Supporting First Responders through the Transcendental Meditation Program**

The Canadian Women for Wellness Initiative (CWWI) participated in a Government of Alberta–funded project to deliver the Transcendental Meditation (TM) program as a wellness intervention for first responders. The program aimed to reduce stress, anxiety, and declining resilience associated with the ongoing pressures of their professional responsibilities.

### **Program Evaluation**

CWWI conducted a comprehensive evaluation to assess the impact of the TM program on participants' perceived stress, anxiety, and resilience levels, while also collecting qualitative feedback on their experiences. Participants were asked to complete both standardized assessments and a TM course evaluation.

### **Data Collection Methods**

#### **1. Quantitative Measures:**

- Perceived stress was measured using the *Cohen Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)*.
- Anxiety was assessed using the *Trait Anxiety Scale (TAS)*.
- Resilience was measured using the *Brief Resilience Scale (BRS)*.

#### **2. Qualitative Measures:**

- Participants completed an open-ended questionnaire describing their personal experiences with the TM program in their own words.

#### **3. Course Evaluation:**

- Each participant completed a TM course evaluation form to provide feedback on program content, delivery, and perceived benefits.
- 

Participants completed three quantitative pre-tests up to one week before starting the TM course and again ten weeks after their initial day of instruction. At the same time as the post-tests, participants also submitted their qualitative feedback and course evaluations. All data were analyzed within one month of project completion.

### **Program Delivery**

CWWI delivered the six-month TM program to 41 first responders, including firefighters, paramedics, ambulance drivers, and police officers. Participant recruitment occurred primarily through Facebook advertisements and word-of-mouth referrals.

The participants who participated included

**Occupation:**

- Firefighter: 63.16%
- Paramedics/Ambulance Drivers: 21.05
- Police: 10.53
- Other: 5.26

**Gender:**

- Male: 73.68
- Female: 26.32

CWWI measured the impact of the project with 3 quantitative measures a qualitative survey and a TM course evaluation.

**Quantitative Measures**

1) The Perceived Stress Scale has ten questions asking participants to rate the level of stress they have experienced over the last month. The participants who took the survey showed a **23.8% decrease** in perceived stress over the ten-week period.

2) The Trait anxiety scale has 20 questions designed to measure how much anxiety an individual is experiencing. The overall decrease in anxiety for the whole group, over the ten-week period was **29.45%**

3) The brief resilience survey is a six question self-assessment tool to assess levels of resilience. The overall increase in resilience experience by the participants was **8.81 %**

**TM Course Evaluation**

The course evaluation evaluates the TM course with the following questions:

**1) The TM training objectives have been clearly stated**

Strongly agree: 68.42%

Agree: 38.58%

Neutral, disagree or strongly disagree 0%

**2) The TM sessions correspond to the training objectives**

Strongly agree: 73.68%

Agree: 26.32%

Neutral, disagree or strongly disagree: 0%

**3) The time allocated for this training is adequate**

Strongly agree: 68.42%

Agree: 26.32%

Neutral: 0%

Disagree: 5.26%

Strongly disagree: 0%

**4) Do you think you understand the principles behind the practice of TM?**

Yes: 100%

No: 0%

**5) Are you satisfied with your TM practice so far?**

Yes: 94.7%

No: 5.26%

**6) Do you think you can continue to practice TM easily and effortlessly?**

Yes: 94.7%

No: 5.26%

**7) Do you recognize the importance of meditating regularly twice a day?**

Yes: 100%

NO: 0%

**8) Do you think you will be able to continue meditating twice a day?**

Yes: 73.60%

No: 26.32%

**9) The teachers have a broad understanding of principals and practice of TM**

Strongly agree: 84.21%

Agree: 15.79%

Neutral, disagree or strongly disagree: 0%

**10) Were the teachers' explanations clear?**

Yes: 100%

No: 100%

**11) Did the teachers encourage comments and dialogue**

Yes: 100%

No: 100 %

**12) Did the teacher seem prepared and well organized**

Yes: 94.74%

No: 5.26%

**13) Did you experience benefits in the following areas:**

**Improved health:** 84.21 % saw improvements in health

**Reduced stress:** 94.74% felt a reduction in stress levels

**Decreased anxiety:** 78.95% experience decrease in anxiety

**Reduction of depression:** 57.89% experience less depression

**Reduction of fatigue:** 63.16% felt less fatigue

**Better relationship with spouse:** 73.68% reported improved relationship with spouse.

**Qualitative survey**

The qualitative survey asked participants to describe, in their own words, the benefits they experienced in four key areas: mental, physical, emotional, and relational. Additionally, they were asked to identify the most impactful aspect of their meditation practice.

The survey results revealed that nearly all participants reported positive changes in at least one area of their lives. Only a small minority (about 5%) indicated they had not yet noticed any changes. The majority, however, reported significant improvements.

It's important to note that the survey was conducted ten weeks into a six-month course, and by the end of the full course, students typically experience even more profound benefits as their meditation practice becomes more established.

Below are some of the responses from the qualitative survey.

### **Mental**

- Calmer mind, less busy-ness. More freedom to think and be decisive.
- Calmer, a little less indecisive and overwhelmed
- I feel more alert when doing TM. Not as tired, and my mind seems less foggy

### **Physical**

- Anxiety does not cause as much tension in my muscles. I feel more rested and grounded physically
- Helped with chronic pain as it settles my body and helps me attune to my body.
- TM has given me energy specifically at the part of my day when work ends and “home” work begins. I have been meditating just after I arrive home from work and I find it helps me reset for my family after a long day at work

### **Emotional**

- Emotionally I feel more prepared for stressful situations
- Less quick to anger, feel like I’m easier going, more accepting of situations out of my control.
- My emotions seems to be better. I’m not upset, and I seem to cope with issues better

### **Relationships**

- Showing more patience with people closest to me so by default there is a happier more communicative environment at home. Same with at work with co-workers.
- My communication skills have improved. I am able to share how I feel, what I need, and what I can offer in a clearer more concise manner.
- My relationship with my spouse and co-workers has improved. My wife is starting to meditate now as well, and it is obvious when we meditate we are nicer to each other and more calm.

**Other**

- I feel like TM has also helped me process stress for which my PTSD is attributed to. I think having confidence in my ability to handle new stressors helps to also be confident for processing past issues.
- I'm able to deal with tougher situations easier because I think more than act. I give more of a chance to people. I am more calm.
- TM works for me because of the silence. My nervous system injuries cause me to have a pretty sensitive startle response so in the meditation there are no prompts to startle me or bring me out of the experience.

**Most beneficial aspect of TM**

- It has helped me relieve stress and anxiety. I am more productive when doing TM and have a clearer mindset.
- Energy, calmer/quieter mind, it's made me more aware of my environment too but also helps with my confidence to manage "life".
- Energy, calmer/quieter mind, it's made me more aware of my environment too but also helps with my confidence to manage "life".