

# Transcendental Meditation Helps Vets with PTSD

By RICK NAUERT PHD *Senior News Editor*  
Reviewed by John M. Grohol, Psy.D. on June 2, 2011

A recently published pilot study suggests the practice of Transcendental Meditation reduces symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder ([PTSD](#)).

Although the research employed a very small number of participants (n = 5), the veterans of the Iraq/Afghanistan wars showed a 50 percent reduction in their symptoms of PTSD after eight weeks of practicing Transcendental Meditation.

The veterans, ages 25- to 40-years-old, had served in Iraq, Afghanistan or both from 10 months to two years, settings in which they experienced moderate or heavy moderate combat.

The study found that Transcendental Meditation produced significant reductions in stress and [depression](#), and marked improvements in relationships and overall quality of life. Furthermore, the authors reported that the technique was easy to perform and was well accepted by the veterans.

The Clinician Administered PTSD Scale (CAPS) was the primary measure for assessing the effectiveness of TM practice on PTSD symptoms. CAPS is considered by the Department of Veterans Affairs as the "gold standard" for PTSD assessment and diagnosis for both military veteran and civilian trauma survivors.

"Even though the number of veterans in this study was small, the results were very impressive," said Norman Rosenthal, M.D., clinical professor of psychiatry at Georgetown University Medical School.

"These young men were in extreme distress as a direct result of trauma suffered during combat, and the simple and effortless Transcendental Meditation technique literally transformed their lives."

The findings were similar to those from a randomized controlled study of Vietnam veterans conducted by researchers at the University of Colorado School of Medicine.

In that study, published in the *Journal of Counseling and Development* in 1985, after three months of twice-daily TM practice, the veterans had fewer symptoms than those receiving conventional [psychotherapy](#) of the day. In fact, most of the TM-treated subjects required no further treatment.

"Even though the combat experiences of current soldiers and Vietnam veterans are quite different, the fact that our study corroborates the results of the previous study tells us that this technique has the potential to be an effective tool against PTSD and combat stress, regardless of combat situation," explained Sarina Grosswald, Ed.D., co-researcher on the study.

Rosenthal believes Transcendental Meditation helps people with PTSD because regular practice produces long-term changes in sympathetic nervous system activity, as evidenced by decreased blood pressure, and lower reactivity to stress.

"Transcendental Meditation quiets down the nervous system, and slows down the 'fight-or-flight' response," he said. People with PTSD show overactive fight-or-flight responses, making them excellent candidates for Transcendental Meditation.

Rosenthal pointed out that there is an urgent need to find effective and cost-effective treatments for veterans with combat-related PTSD.

"The condition is common, affecting an estimated one in seven deployed soldiers and Marines, most of whom do not get adequate treatment. So far, only one treatment—simulation exposure to battleground scenes—has been deemed effective, but it requires specialized software and hardware, trained personnel and is labor-intensive.

"Based on our study and previous findings, I believe Transcendental Meditation certainly warrants further study for combat-related PTSD," Rosenthal said.

The study is found in the June 2011 issue of *Military Medicine* .

Source: Roth Media