

Mind your health

Can meditation reduce stress disorder?

FOR PEOPLE SUFFERING from severe post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), here comes good news: the Transcendental Meditation (TM) technique can significantly reduce the stress disorder in a flat 10 days.

In experiments on Congolese war refugees living in Ugandan camps, researchers found these fascinating results. "An earlier study found a similar result after 30 days where 90 per cent of TM participants dropped to a non-symptomatic level. But we were surprised to see such a significant reduction with this group after just 10 days," said lead author Colonel Brian Rees from US Army Reserve Medical Corps.

The researchers tested 11 participants after 10-days and 30-days TM practice. After just 10-days, PTSD symptoms dropped almost 30 per cent. "What makes this study interesting is when



we tested them in the 90 days before they began the TM technique, their PTSD scores kept going up," said co-author Fred Travis, director of the Center for Brain, Consciousness and Cognition at Maharishi University of Management situated in Iowa, US. "The Transcen-

denal Meditation technique is increasingly being seen as a viable treatment by the US military," added Rees.

According to the researchers, during this particular meditation technique, one experiences a deep state of restful alertness. Repeated experience of this state for 20

minutes twice a day cultures the nervous system to maintain settled mental and physical functioning the rest of the day. This helps minimise disturbing thoughts, sleep difficulties and other adverse PTSD symptoms, said the study published in the *Journal of Traumatic Stress*. IANS

Sitting on a ticking clock?

Own a car or TV? Obesity, diabetes could be lurking



IS THERE A possible connection between owning car or computer or even TV set with obesity? Definitely, say researchers.

Having high-priced consumer goods result in too much sitting, less physical activity and increased consumption of calories - and this can lead to lifestyle diseases like obesity and diabetes, shows new research.

"The spread of obesity and type-2 diabetes could become epidemic in low- and middle-income countries as more families are able to own higher priced modern-day conveniences such as TVs, computers and cars," warned Scott Lear, a professor of health sciences at Simon Fraser University (SFU) in Canada.

It's the sitting that can be detrimental. It's not only the opposite of being active, but it actually reduces your body's ability to break down fat and use sugar in the blood for energy, explained Lear.

Lear headed an international research team that analysed

data on more than 150,000 adults from 17 countries - ranging from high and middle income to low-income nations.

Researchers, who questioned participants about ownership as well as physical activity and diet, found a 400 per cent increase in obesity and a 250 per cent increase in diabetes among owners of these items in low-income countries.

The study also showed that owning all three devices was associated with a 31 per cent decrease in physical activity, 21 per cent increase in sitting and a 9 cm increase in waist size, compared with those who owned no devices.

The results can lead to potentially devastating societal health care consequences in these countries, Lear added.

Rates of increase of obesity and diabetes are expected to rise as low- and middle-income countries develop and become more industrialised, said the SFU study published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*. IANS

ALIGN YOUR LIFE

Open Your Windows

Travelling has always been a big part of my life. Since I was young, I was fond of visiting new places. I grew up in a middle class home in Mumbai with a wonderful family. My father could not afford to take us on exotic holidays and so we visited my grandmother often in a small village in Gujarat. We would travel by train, passing through unknown places, meeting new people and eating home-made snacks along the way.

The entire holiday was spent reading classic literature and eating mangoes during the hot summer months. In those days life was simple and needs were few. Over the years my father took us to many places within India; from the Taj Mahal to small villages in the foothills of the Himalayas. Every trip was special and carefully planned. The joy of going to these new places always took over and it never crossed my mind that we were staying in small inexpensive hotels.

My love for travelling did not die down but only grew stronger with time. When I shared my secret desire of traveling the world with my family, they were encouraging and allowed me to take up a job in Hong Kong at an early age. In many ways it was my family who gave me wings to fly.

Since then I have been to many countries and learnt to try different types of cuisines. And yet I get excited like a child when planning my next trip, even if it is to a wild life sanctuary in the UAE. In this age of price rise and mounting expenses, not all of us can plan to go on expensive holidays. In fact some of us barely manage to make it back home once a year. So what can we do to make life more interesting for ourselves and our children?

There are so many places to visit in the UAE, from the mountains of Fujairah to the lovely beaches of Jumeirah. There is so much to do, from bird watching to kayaking. There are drama workshops, lovely book libraries. All we need to do is open our little window and soak in what's around us to make our lives more fulfilling. I have enjoyed many evenings with friends in beautiful family parks of Abu Dhabi and attended plays put up by local drama groups in Dubai.

Sometimes you don't need to travel to far off places for a holiday. If you get a walking map of your city, you will be amazed at how many places you can visit within your city. Travelling is not only about going to new places; it's also about opening a window to a new way of life that is all around us.

Shivani Adalja is a Dubai-based well-being expert. She runs the Alignment Insitute which offers effective solutions that focus on stress management and overall wellbeing. Email align@shivaniadalja.com

