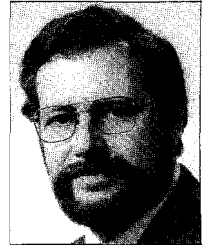


# BOOKS

## THE RELAXATION RESPONSE

### THE TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION PROGRAM FOR BUSINESS PEOPLE

GUEST  
BOOK  
REVIEW



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Before I launch into my reviews of *The Relaxation Response* and *The Transcendental Meditation Program for Business People*, I have a confession to make. . . . This reviewer is a card-carrying meditator. I find meditation useful, stress-reducing, and a way to examine my own thoughts. Meditation gives me a sense of fulfillment and reaffirms my belief that there is a purpose to my existence. Besides, it makes me feel good, and occasionally, during meditation, I find a broad smile stealing across my face!

I do not meditate daily. I wish I did, I know it is good for me, but as with so many things, I put it off. I sometimes forget. Oh, one more thing about the way I meditate. I try different techniques. I often change mantras. Sometimes I use transcendental meditation (TM). Sometimes I meditate on a theme, using meditation in problem-solving, by concentrating on an issue that concerns me. Now, on to the books. . . .

*The Relaxation Response*, by Herbert Benson, is an attempt to demythologize meditation. Benson, an assistant professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, was asked by practitioners of transcendental meditation to study the effects of TM on the physiology of the body. The results of his (and others') research indicates that TM lowers blood pressure, slows the heart rate and reduces the physiological evidence of stress. If Benson had stopped there, he would have made a minor contribution to the litera-

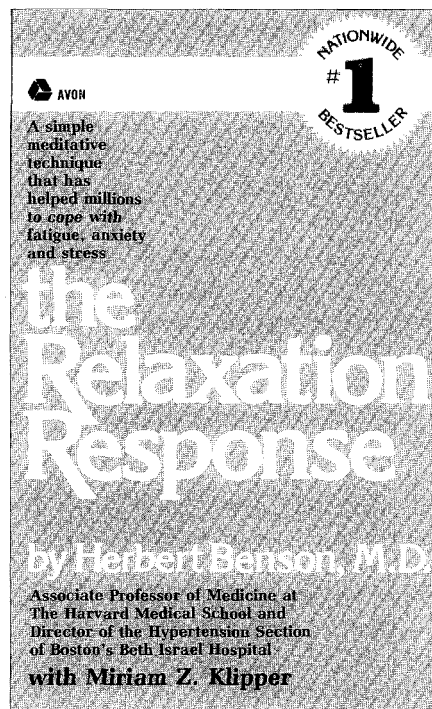
ture. Fortunately, he did not stop there. Somewhat to the chagrin of TM practitioners, Benson went ahead and identified four basic elements of meditation. He then continued his research of people who utilized these four basic elements, but who were not TM initiates. His research indicated

modern scientific research which hypothesizes the reasons why meditation is useful in reducing stress.

For example, one hypothesis deals with our physiological reactions including increased blood pressure, rapid heartbeat and labored breathing, which prepare us for conflict or escape. This effect has been labeled "the fight-flight phenomenon." Because a modern person's stressful situations are usually related to social or business matters, the fight-flight responses are inappropriate. Yet, the body continues to experience tension. The results are discomfort, anxiety, heart attacks and/or strokes. Benson suggests that meditation is a good mechanism for coping with the pent-up tension of the fight-flight phenomenon.

More importantly, he clearly and concisely identifies the four basic elements of meditation (pages 112 and 117) and explains how these can induce a meditative state. There is one problem, however. It seems to me that Benson did not have enough material for a book and enlarged a monograph, resulting in non-essential material being included.

*The Transcendental Meditation Program for Business People*, by Robert B. Cory, is a short book designed to promote transcendental meditation. It does so by: (1) relating it to the human potential movement; (2) citing testimonials from chief executive officers of large corporations; (3) noting medical research, and (4) describing



that there was no substantial difference between the practitioners of TM and those people who meditate using the four basic principles.

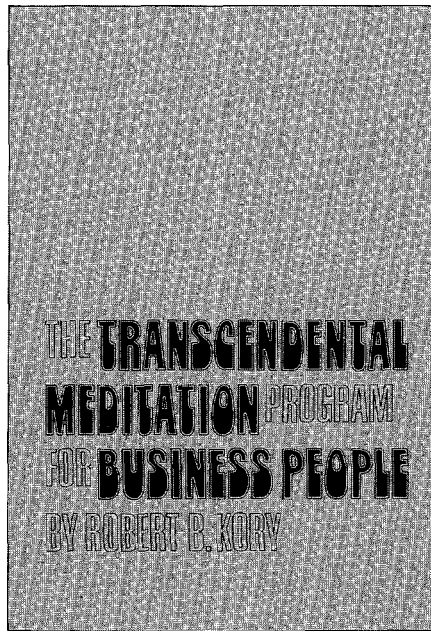
Therefore, this book advocates the benefits of meditation *without* the adoption of a prescribed method. Furthermore, in Benson's attempt to demythologize meditation, he delves into the physiological reactions of the body, puts religious meditative practices into historical perspective, and cites

some management studies in which meditation is used.

Two appendixes are also included. The first one is entitled, "Questions and Answers." All the questions in this appendix scrupulously avoid describing the meditative procedures or how a reader might acquire meditative skill. Skill acquisition is left to TM instructors — the already initiated. In fact, Cory states, on page 59, "The technique of TM is unique in that it cannot be learned from a book or do-it-yourself cassettes. To learn the TM technique properly, a person must receive instruction from a qualified teacher with the TM program."

This may or may not be true. Remember that Benson has already pointed out that the results of meditation can be achieved without the use of a "unique process."

The second appendix is merely a series of graphs depicting the physiological and mental charac-



*The Relaxation Response*, by Herbert Benson, M.D., with Miriam Z. Klipper, William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1976. 158 pages. Price: \$5.95.

*The Transcendental Meditation Program for Business People*, by Robert B. Cory, AMACOM, a division of American Management Associations, 1976. 91 pages. Price: no data available.

teristics of a transcendental meditator as opposed to a non-transcendental meditator.

I found this book unsettling. I felt as though I was being informed about a secret, exclusive club that I could not join unless I passed an initiation. Personally I resent the air of mystery Cory intimates surrounding TM. Nor do I swallow the "party-line propaganda" that this group has THE ANSWER.

For trainers, books on meditation can be useful in three ways: (1) to acquaint nonmeditators with the principles and procedures; (2) to assist meditators in improving their ability, and (3) to assist trainers in the teaching of others.

Benson's book can be useful in all three areas. Cory's book is only useful for selling the idea of meditation, and then only to people who are impressed by testimonials and research studies. . . .  
*Fredric Margolis*

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