

February 11, 1996

To: Dr. Deane H. Shapiro, Jr., professor of psychology

Fr: Kathryn Edwards, USC School of Social Work (student)

Subject: Your article "Examining the content and context of meditation" in the Journal of Humanistic Psych, 1994.

I was delighted that I found your article during a literary search for my first year research class at USC School of Social Work. Although I will not implement my "research design" for this class, I hope to do so in the future. My "research" is to test the efficacy of mindfulness meditation (perhaps a la Jon Kabat-Zinn) in relieving symptoms of PTSD in victims of domestic violence. I am currently doing an internship at a transitional living apartment complex for victims of domestic violence.

I was searching for the most "generic" meditation I could find to make it more acceptable to the masses. I was avoiding any types of meditation with "unacceptable" religious or spiritual overtones. After reading your article I was forced to examine my motives for meditation research as you had so thoughtfully done.

I started TM meditation 11 years ago after ending up in the hospital for gastroenteritis a couple of times. Although wary of the spiritual overtones, I faithfully started my practice of meditation and have now been meditating for about 11 years. Along the way I threw away my bottle of Maalox, lessened the severity of migraines, and found I had a better memory (and returned to school). But I also have developed a sense of what you called "felt truth" and the view of the universe as "benevolent". There are times when I feel that somehow each moment is perfect and I am right there with it.

I do not plan to change my view or my meditation based on any scientific evidence also. I see that maybe a part of what helped me in the meditation was the context or the spiritual part (that I am carefully trying to separate from my research project). With your article in mind maybe I will investigate the meditation with perhaps a "spiritual" and a "nonspiritual" control to see which one works best.

From: "John Lovas" [REDACTED]
Subject: On content & context of meditation
Date: Fri, July 5, 2013 11:06 am
To: dhshapir@uci.edu

I'm just now discovering & reading your 1994 paper: "Examining the content and context of meditation ..." and find it WONDERFUL! I'll be quoting it for sure - GREAT material - thank you!

Metta,
John

Dr. John Lovas
Assistant Dean - Student Affairs
Faculty of Dentistry
Dalhousie University

MONDAY, JANUARY 30, 2012

Everything changes

With continued practice, a gradual shift occurs even in the intention behind practicing - from self-regulation, to self-exploration, and finally self-liberation.

Shapiro DH. A preliminary study of long-term meditators: Goals, effects, religious orientation, cognitions. Journal of Transpersonal Psychology 1992; 24(1): 23-39.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 29, 2012

Always there

"we can find peace of mind in the midst of raging emotions, profound insight in the midst of complete confusion, and the seeds of compassion in our darkest moments, even when we feel completely lost and alone."
Mingyur Rinpoche

Shambhala Sun, March 2012

Good morning Dr. Shapiro,

I quoted your important paper on my blog for seasoned practitioners:
<http://www.johnlovas.com/>

My other blog, for people just starting mindfulness practices:
<http://mindfulnessforeveryone.blogspot.com/>

Best regards,
John.

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8 October 1994

Dr. Deane Shapiro
Department of Psychiatry
California College of Medicine
University of California
Irvine, CA

Dear Dr. Shapiro:

Your article on meditation in JHP was very stimulating. I found your account of your experiences in various religious traditions extremely interesting.

My own experiences, while different, are similar. I used TM for three or four years, then was shakabukued into Nichiren Shoshu, then met a young lady who tried to urge me into Eckankar. Confused, I went on a vision quest, purifying myself by fasting for five days before I began the quest, and then going out into the country -- there was no wilderness handy -- to try out the three meditation modes to see which one I considered most powerful. It was fairly easy to rule out Eckankar, but choosing between TM and Nichiren Shoshu was more difficult. Eventually I opted for the latter.

I continued gongyo for several more years until something occurred to me: My teacher had told me that it was a mistake to chant for a specific thing, because I would get it and then would be unhappy. He told me it would be better to chant for happiness. So that was what I was doing, chanting that things that made me happy would happen to me, until I realized that I had slipped indiscernibly into a mental habit that whatever happened to me made me happy. At that point I stopped chanting. I think maybe I should take it up again, because occasionally I find myself lapsing from the calm that I had found in Nichiren Shoshu.

Perhaps the efficacy of a particular technique does not enforce the truth of the ideology connected with it. But I think maybe it is also true that no technique will be efficacious unless there is some sort of ideology attached.

Cordially,


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