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Abstract

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THE CONTENT AND CONTEXT OF MEDITATION: RELATIONSHIP TO PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

DEANE H. SHAPIRO, JR, University of California, Irvine

Previous efforts have provided a non-cultic definition of the content of meditation, and have examined its efficacy with a variety of clinical problems. This research, involving meditation as a self-regulation strategy, includes stress and tension management, the addictions, and hypertension.

This research has shown that meditation is as effective, but not more effective than other self-control techniques (such as biofeedback, hypnosis, progressive relaxation) in the treatment of the above mentioned clinical problems.

Research has also examined the phenomenological effects of meditation as an altered state of consciousness. These effects suggest a profound change in the practitioners view of oneself, other people, and the "cosmos."

Several critical questions now need to be addressed. These include the nature and importance of the "context" within which meditation is practiced; issues of universalist essence and particularistic practice; interface between self-control and "control by a benevolent other"; and fundamental issues about the relationship, overlap, and differences regarding belief, theory, and values in science and religion.