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Trend of meditation remedies grows on campuses

By Rachel Spivak, Collegian Staff Writer

A growing trend in the country that may reduce stress, create clearer thinking and help academic achievement is here. And it's not in pill form.

Transcendental Meditation is hitting the mainstream via universities and training sessions across the country.

"There's no belief involved; it's a mechanical process," said Bob Roth, a 33-year meditation instructor. "Do you need to believe in electricity to turn on a light or even understand it?"

And since Transcendental Meditators don't need a specific belief system, the focus should be on the myriad of benefits, said Greg Schweitzer, director of Stress Reductions Resources in Reading. "Stress levels go down, they feel more alert in classes and notice they're thinking more clearly," he said.

College students anticipating a few all-nighters before finals week can use meditation to help with semester study stresses.

"Just quiet the mind," Schweitzer said. "Then you become more aware of things around you. It's easier to study for an exam, and you can take in more of what your professor is saying."

The phenomenon, developed about 50 years ago, has about 5 million members worldwide, including some Penn State locals.

Students at Harvard, Boston College and Yale already have meditation at their fingertips, said Roth, vice president of the David Lynch Foundation for Consciousness-based Education and World Peace.

Roth said that the foundation distributes scholarships for studying meditation. He said that he hopes to prevent stresses that build up and lead to depression.

"Research shows that Transcendental Meditation increases IQ and academic performance," Roth said. "It's not just to stop stress, but to move ahead in life."

Schweitzer and Roth said Transcendental Meditation can help increase a person's immunity and help with heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke and migraines.

Schweitzer, who taught meditation for three years at the Penn State Hershey Medical Center, said she hopes the benefits spread further in the future.

"One person I taught had a good point," he said. "If every world leader meditated, they would be more peaceful and relaxed -- what a wonderful world we could have."