

But meditation does more than reduce stress, bring harmony and increase focus. As the Beatles demonstrated in 1968 when they visited the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in his Himalayan ashram (they had met him in London in 1967), it can also give you much needed gravitas. Actress Heather Graham started meditating at the suggestion of director David Lynch, another Maharishi student, 12 years ago on the set of his studiously bizarre *Twin Peaks* TV series. "It's easy to spend a lot of time worrying and obsessing, but meditation puts me in a blissful place," says Graham, who typically meditates for 20 minutes when she wakes up and then again in the afternoon. "At the end of the day, all that star stuff doesn't mean anything. Transcendental Meditation reminds you that it's how you feel inside that's important. If you have that, you have everything." Lynch, who also directed *Eraserhead* and *Blue Velvet*, has been sitting for 90 minutes twice a day since 1973. "I catch more ideas at deeper and deeper levels of consciousness, and they have more clarity and power," he says. Imagine the messed-up stuff Lynch might come up with if he meditated for four hours a day.

Goldie Hawn, who says she has been practicing for 31 years, has a dedicated meditation room in her house filled with her favorite crystals, flowers, incense and pictures of the Dalai Lama and Mother Teresa. She meditates twice a day for at least 30 minutes. "How do you learn to witness your destructive emotions?" she asks. "You can only do this by being able to sit quietly and quiet your mind."

More recent devotees are decisively noncrystal. Eileen Harrington, who runs the hard-boiled consumer-fraud group of the Federal Trade Commission in Washington, invited a meditation speaker to give a presentation after 9/11. Roughly half her staff is still at it. Bill Ford, the head of Ford Motors, meditates, as does a former chief of England's top-secret MI-5. Hillary Clinton has talked about meditating, and the Gores are converts. "We both believe in regular prayer, and we often pray together. But meditation--as distinguished from prayer--I highly recommend it," says the man who nearly became our President. Gore's TM mantra is not, as rumored, Florida.

Though I don't meditate as religiously, I can see Gore's point. Taking time out of our video-and Wi-Fi-drenched lives to rediscover the present is a worthwhile activity. And I felt a tangible difference when, in my postmeditative buzz, I would walk down the street hyperaware of my surroundings, like some not particularly useful superhero power. I could even get myself to not need to go to the bathroom if I concentrated on my bladder and accepted its fullness, though I'm not really sure this is a health benefit. But if I weren't one of the few people I know who need to be more active and less chill--I could use an anger-training class--I would meditate more. And if I ever find myself faced with trauma or disease, I think I'll pursue meditation. That's what Buddhists meant it for, after all, since they believe that life inevitably entails suffering. My only counterargument is that they came up with that suffering idea before television was invented. --Reported by David Bjerklie, Alice Park and David Van Biema/New York City, Karen Ann Cullotta/Iowa and Jeanne McDowell/Los Angeles

 [Click to Print](#)

Find this article at: