

The effects of relaxation response meditation on the symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome

Friday, 15 August 2003

The effects of relaxation response meditation on the symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome: results of a controlled treatment study. SUNY at Albany's Keefer and Blanchard matched 16 adults with Irritable Bowel Syndrome into pairs and randomly assigned them to either a 6 week meditation condition, or a 6 week wait list with a monitoring condition.

Patients in the meditation condition were taught Herbert Benson's Relaxation Response and instructed to practice it twice a day for 15 minutes. All patients were tested for symptom reduction (The Composite Primary IBS Symptom Reduction Test) at the beginning of the study and 2 weeks after the end of the study.

Meditation was found to be superior to the control situation ($p=0.04$). By the end of the study, the intervention group showed significant improvement in specific symptoms (flatulence: $p=0.02$ and belching: $p=0.02$).

By 3 month follow-up time, significant improvements were found in these patients' diary submissions, in flatulence ($p=0.01$), belching ($p=0.02$), bloating ($p=0.05$) and diarrhea ($p=0.03$).

The study tentatively concludes that Benson's Relaxation Response meditation is a viable treatment for IBS.

Citation: Keefer L, Blanchard EB. The effects of relaxation response meditation on the symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome: results of a controlled treatment study. Behav Res Ther. 2001 Jul; 39(7):801-11