

# 2026 Combined Pain Care Skills & Substance Use Disorder Training Agenda

## Differences among Meditation Practices for Stress, Resilience, and Mental Health

**Presented by:** Dr. Fred Travis, PhD; Brian Rees MD MPH MSS, COL (ret.) US Army

**Offered:** 18 August 2026; 0730-1130 AM ET

**Location:** National Union Building, Washington, DC

**Description:** Military personnel and dependents as well as healthcare providers are subjected to a variety of stressors. These stressors can serve as the underpinning for substance use disorder (SUD), burnout, inadequate management of pain, post-traumatic stress (PTS), and other morbidities, both psychological and physical. Forms of meditation have been posited as means for the mitigation of a variety of pathologies. The domain of “meditation” is heterogenous: different meditative techniques differ in their origins, goals, procedures, and effects on brain and body.

This workshop will present the current state of knowledge differentiating meditation techniques, to include: data regarding specific diseases; a live demonstration of EEG changes during the practice of Transcendental Meditation (TM); a practical introduction to some commonalities among the actual practices of meditation; as well as an exploration of the spiritual dimension of the growth of consciousness and its impact on health and well-being.

**Learning Objectives:** Upon completion of this workshop, participants will be able to:

1. Understand the changes in the brain specific to different forms of meditation
2. Identify the physiological changes due to the experience of the state of restful alertness that take place during Transcendental meditation and their ramifications for helping people deal with pain, trauma, addiction and poor mental and physical health.
3. Describe how neuroplasticity integrates the physiological patterns of restful alertness into daily life
4. Exemplify trauma vs non-trauma focused therapy for PTS, and review TM and other forms of meditation for PTS, resilience, and burnout
5. Assess Post Traumatic Growth (PTG) as a/the future emphasis in treatment, as well as a model for balance in life even among the non-traumatized
6. Identify three possible mechanisms of action for the effects of TM on burnout, PTSD and PTG
7. Describe commonalities in PTG, growth of consciousness, and in satisfaction and balance in life.
8. Experience and understand the initial onset of various forms of meditation.

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| 0730-0830  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How meditation changes the brain</li><li>• Pain management: dealing with the symptom versus dealing with the cause</li><li>• Meditation, with an emphasis on TM, reduces sympathetic activation and increases immune functioning</li></ul>   | Dr. Travis           |
| 0830-0920  | <p>Live demonstration of EEG changes during TM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• TM leads to restful alertness—a fourth state of consciousness<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Neuroplasticity--integrates restful alertness into daily life<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Increased self-actualization</li><li>▪ Increased well-being</li></ul></li></ul></li><li>• Neuroimaging: reduced fMRI response to pain</li></ul> | Dr. Travis           |
| 0920-0930  | BREAK  |                      |
| 0930 -1030 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How we got here: trauma vs non-trauma focused therapy for PTS</li><li>• Meditation for PTS, resilience, and burnout</li><li>• Post traumatic growth</li></ul>  | Dr. Rees             |
| 1030-1110  | <p>Participation time!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Out of your chair (if you want)... Brief surya namaskar demonstration</li><li>• Group quasi-meditation: how different meditative techniques differ</li></ul>  | Dr. Rees             |
| 1110-1130  | Questions & Answers, Resources   | Drs. Travis and Rees |